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MEXICO:

Reports, Document on Pre-Rebellion Chiapas

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Reports, Document on Pre-Rebellion Chiapas

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Reports, Document on Pre-Rebellion Chiapas

Armed Group Antecedents

94CA0097A Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 897, 10 Jan 94 pp 22-23, 25, 27

[Article by Guillermo Correa, Julio Cesar Lopez, and Ignacio Ramirez]

[Text] Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas—The Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN) emerged as an armed group in the early 1980's under the slogan "Live for the homeland or die for freedom."

The Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) had been formed previously; they were one of the organizations that spread the urban and rural guerrilla fighting into several states in the 1970's. When the FALN disappeared, their members in Chiapas crossed out the A, leaving the organization's name as the Forces of National Liberation (FLN).

From it emerged the present-day EZLN, which on 1 January, coinciding with the enactment of the Free Trade Agreement, cried: "Enough!" And on behalf of those who "have nothing, absolutely nothing," it proceeded to take over several Chiapas towns, weapons in hand.

The current conflict in Chiapas has its most remote antecedent in the "Fray Bartolome de las Casas" First Indian Congress, which was held in San Cristobal from 13 to 15 October 1974.

The date was fitting. It was the 500th anniversary of Fray Bartolome de las Casas's birth. State authorities asked Bishop Samuel Ruiz to cooperate with them; he agreed, on the condition that it be a true Indian congress, not a quaint tourist event, much less one with overtones of demagoguery. His condition was accepted.

So the Indians spoke:

"It is time that we start thinking about whether we really have the freedom that Fray Bartolome de las Casas left behind, because all of us, the Tzotziles, the Tzeltales, the Choles, and the Tojolabales, live in the highlands while all of the ladinos live in the city and have nice ranches and estates.

"But when we demand our rights or want to ask for our lands, we cannot. They already took our former organization away from us. This is why now they even impose our authorities and even the federal ones on us. This is also why there are abuses by the estate owners. Like in Altamirano, where the soldiers burned down our homes, just because we asked for land.

"Who is going to defend us? We are going to defend ourselves by organizing everyone. Because in unity there is strength."

Juan Ortiz, a Mame Indian from Guatemala, said on behalf of his Indian brothers:

"There is a lot of oppression. We are never going to be respected unless we unite. All of Latin America is interested in uniting now.

"We Indians were never consulted when the borders were drawn. We Mame Indians are one example. Our race is split in two: Mames in Guatemala, Mames in the Soconusco in Chiapas.

"Let's talk and let's walk together."

And they kept on talking about the poverty and misery in which the Choles live in their hovels on the estates, owing to the working arrangements imposed on them, the starvation wages, the hacienda stores, the lack of medicine, the alcoholism, and the business interests.

"We work from sunup to sundown for less than seven pesos a day. Children have to start working at age 10 at wages of one to two pesos a day. These wages are paid in vouchers or merchandise or drinks, not in cash. You have to work for free on Sunday under the system they call 'la pagina' [the page]. And then there is the droit de seigneur, when our wives and daughters get raped. At coffee harvest time the women and children have to work just like the men."

In olden days the Indians had communal ownership of the land on which they lived, as stated in the documents in their possession.

"We have been trying to legalize our lands since 1935 and have not been able to get the documentation up to date so far. The engineers, who charge a lot of money, never hand in the complete report, either because they do not finish their measurements or because they get fed up with the commune or ejido members. There is a lot of corruption among the agrarian authorities."

There are no health centers or medicines. As a result the Indians suffer from diseases "and we do not know where they come from, whether it's the water, the food, or the housing. The reason is malnutrition and poverty, because our living conditions are conditions of disease and death."

Grievance movements emerged among the Indian groups after the congress. The "Ach Quiptic ta Lecubtesel" Union of Ejidos was created on 12 December 1975 in the Ocosingo Forest. The "Land and Freedom" Union of Ejidos emerged in 1976 in the Comitan area, which includes part of the Lacandon Forest. And on 14 August 1978 the "Peasant Struggle" Union of Ejidos was born.

Other independent groups were formed in the northern part of the state starting in 1974; they later linked up with the Proletarian Line (LP) movement.

In the highlands region the peasants from Villa de las Rosas and Teopisca pursued the struggle to regain their lands most intensely, as did the Indians from San Juan Chamula, Larrainzar, and Tenejapa.

The Peasant Bloc of the State of Chiapas (Blocech) was organized in the Soconusco zone in 1979.

Agrarian movements also arose along the coast. There was a vigorous peasant movement that took isolated action in Tonala, Arriaga, and Pijijiapan.

In the case of the peasants from Villaflores, Chiapa de Corzo, and Flores Magon, the struggle revolved around

demands to extend the ejido areas and, in a few cases, funding for or the establishment of new population centers.

Other movements had not waited for the congress. This was the case with the community of Venustiano Carranza in the Central Valleys, which had been fighting to regain its communal lands since the 1930's, and with the 10 April Peasant Alliance in the Fraylesca.

Neither the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) nor the Socialist Workers Party (PST) were involved back then. Nor were mass organizations like the Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants (CIOAC) or the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (OCEZ) or the Union of Ejido Unions and Peasant Groups in Solidarity of Chiapas, all of which emerged more strongly in the late 1970's.

In 1974, President Luis Echeverria decreed that 614,000 hectares of the Lacandon Forest would remain the possession of just 67 Lacandon Indians, even though more than 20,000 peasants who had been brought in from all over the country were already settled in the surrounding area and were asking for plots of land. Eventually, the peasants charge, the lands remained in the hands of the latifundio [great estate] holders and officials of Nacional Financiera (NAFIN) [National Finance Bank], who got rich by exploiting the fancy woods, thus further intensifying discontent in the region.

A group of leftist militants that emerged as part of the 1968 Student Movement also arrived in the Chiapas jungle in the early 1970's, seeking to identify with the problems of the peasants under the pro-Maoist "mass line."

In 1974 the Federal Government destroyed a guerrilla encampment in the Lacandon Forest. It was a training camp that the FALN had been operating on "El Diamante" estate in the municipality of Ocosingo. The FALN were led by Cesar German Yanez Munoz, "Pedro."

Weapons and subversive propaganda were seized, and an undetermined number of members of the organization were arrested. They were displayed publicly by the then attorney general of the republic, Pedro Ojeda Paullada.

The Emiliano Zapata Revolutionary Brigade, which was part of the 23 September Communist League, then came to Chiapas. It was under the command of Luis Miguel Corral Garcia and Manuel Amarilla Palafox, who were killed in Mexico City in 1977.

The Guiding Ideological Organization (OID) officially arrived in the state in late 1977 and early 1978. Also showing up were the militants from the Union of the People, which later became the Clandestine Revolutionary Workers Party-Union of the People (PROCUP); after 25 years of armed struggle this group linked up ideologically with the Party of the Poor (PDLP), which Lucio Cabanas had founded in the state of Guerrero.

These groups pursued their policy of the "Prolonged People's War," based on Marxist-Leninist fundamentals, "to achieve political power and emancipate the people from the bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism."

In 1982 PROCUP took up the legacy of the Union of the People, an armed group founded by Jose Maria Ortiz Vides of Guatemala. That year it reassessed its short-, medium-, and long-term goals for the takeover of power by the proletariat.

For five years as the Union of the People, its activists conducted "expropriations" (bank holdups) and planted bombs in shopping centers, banks, and government offices along with other armed militant groups.

The Armed Forces of National Liberation were exterminated in Chiapas. Years later, other natives of Chiapas rebuilt the political-military organization, removing the A from its initials. As of the early 1980's they called themselves the Forces of National Liberation (FLN) and set up their armed wing: the Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN).

The EZLN has a broad social base. According to ranchers in Ocosingo and Altamirano, its visible face is the Emiliano Zapata National Independent Peasant Alliance (ANCIEZ).

ANCIEZ started in late 1989, when it was called the Emiliano Zapata Independent Peasant Alliance (ACIEZ). It was local back then, with a presence in Altamirano, Sabanilla, Salto de Agua, Ocosingo, and San Cristobal de las Casas.

It set itself up as ANCIEZ two years later, taking in Indians and peasants from the municipalities of El Bosque, Larrainzar, Chenalho, Ocosingo, Chanal, Oxchuc, Huixtan, Salto de Agua, Tila, Tumbala, Sabanilla, and San Cristobal de las Casas. It was officially established in the Puebla highlands, where peasant delegates from the states of Chihuahua, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Puebla met. The next year, 1992, peasants from Coahuila, Guerrero, and San Luis Potosi joined the organization.

They demonstrated their ability to call up and rally their members on 12 October 1992 in Chiapas to commemorate 500 years of Indian, Black, and Grassroots Resistance. Some 10,000 Indians marched in San Cristobal de las Casas, half of them from ANCIEZ. They could be distinguished from the rest because their columns had a military look and were carrying bows and arrows.

They toppled the statue of Diego de Mazariegos, the conqueror and founder of San Cristobal de las Casas. Mayor Jorge Mario Lescieur Talavera accused the Dominican friars of what he called "acts of vandalism."

Seventeen other organizations that on 11 October 1992 had formed the Front of Social Organizations of Chiapas (FOSCH) marched along with ANCIEZ. The most representative were CIOAC, OCEZ, and the Council of Indian Representatives of the Chiapas Highlands (CRIACH).

During the days prior to the Indian march, a rumor was going around the forest and highlands of Ocosingo, Altamirano, and Las Margaritas that the guerrillas were going to take over the municipal capitals and loot shops.

ANCIEZ disappeared officially from Chiapas in February 1993 after an assembly in Sabanilla. All of its leaders left San Cristobal de las Casas during the first three months of

the year. No one knows where they went. The last time that they appeared as an organization was during a FOSCH march in Tuxtla Gutierrez on 22 and 23 April of last year. The EZLN kept up its political, ideological, and military training, however.

The first public news of the guerrillas' existence came after the charred bodies of two military personnel were found in San Isidro El Ocotal on 20 March 1993. Then came the shoot-outs in the Corralchen highlands, between Ocosingo and Altamirano, on 22, 23, and 24 May. Two soldiers were reported dead and two others wounded. A civilian, who it is now known belonged to the EZLN, also died.

In March and April 1993, issue 61 of the newspaper PROLETARIO, which is published by PROCUP-PDLP and distributed clandestinely in several states around the country, said that "the existence of the revolutionary movement in the state (Chiapas) is an open secret that is being heard and spread all over. The people are helping it, sympathizing with, aiding, and protecting the guerrillas."

It commented on the appointment of Governor Patrocinio Gonzalez Blanco as interior secretary:

"There were countless human rights violations in Chiapas during his term of office: assassinations of peasant and Indian leaders in agrarian conflicts; merciless evictions of entire communities struggling for land; quasi-fascist reforms of the Penal Code; jails full of peasants, Indians, and social fighters; harassment of newsmen for exercising their freedom of expression, to the point of murder in some instances; serial killings of homosexuals, suggesting the existence of "death squads" linked to police chiefs in the state; a rise in drug trafficking throughout the state; persecution and jailing of clergy committed to the suffering people and Indians; cacique and cattle-ranching groups that encourage paramilitary forces to kill grass-roots leaders, attack peasants and Indians, and kidnap and assault citizens.

"These are Patrocinio Gonzalez Garrido's credentials, and his appointment to head the secretariat in charge of internal politics is symptomatic. As far as the people of Chiapas are concerned, Gonzalez Garrido remains a latent threat, all the more so since his successor enjoys his complete confidence and is committed to the same shady, retrograde, cacique interests: Elmar Setzer Marseille."

Although there were no political grievances at all, there is evidence that the wave of kidnappings gripping Chiapas is linked to the guerrillas.

At least 20 persons have been kidnapped over the past two years, and ransoms of close to 40 million new pesos have been paid.

On 6 January 1993, for example, rancher and coffee-grower Joaquin Gutierrez Farrera was kidnapped. He was forcibly removed from a restaurant in the town of Rizo de Oro, in Cintalapa, by a group of seven heavily armed men, who took him into the highlands along the border with Oaxaca. A month later, on 17 February, he was released, weighing 20 kilos less, after a ransom of 1.5 million new pesos had been paid.

A month later, on 20 February, rancher and merchant Ramon Wong Jimenez was kidnapped by another heavily armed group. "Men with light weapons cut him off on the coastal highway," said his driver, Luciano Dominguez Arreola.

On 8 November, ranchers Jorge Alfredo Chamlaty Espinosa and Arnulfo Puon Horita were kidnapped by six individuals carrying high-powered weapons.

Four days before, the leader of the Livestock Union of the Coast, Mario Monterrosa Reyes, had disappeared; he was released five days later after his relatives paid a ransom of 240,000 new pesos.

This is Monterrosa's account:

"They were passing themselves off as members of Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). They belong to a Central American international command consisting of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Mexicans. They use R-15, AK-47, and M-16 automatic weapons and grenades. They also have a sophisticated radiocommunications network and information on persons likely to be kidnapped. They are only after money, and based on what they said, they need it to buy medicine, food, and weapons...."

Northerners' Activities

94CA0097B Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 897, 10 Jan 94 pp 28-31

[Article by Antonio Jaquez]

[Text] Torreon, Coahuila—"We are saying that things have to be transformed in our country and that the transformation has to be the work of the masses themselves...in a very strong class struggle, in a confrontation with the bourgeoisie. From that standpoint we have to wage a great revolutionary war."

So reads a document from Popular Line, a movement that began in this city in the early 1970's and later spread to other regions of the country, including the Chiapas jungle, where it sowed the ideological seeds of the guerrilla war, according to Jesuit priest Mardonio Morales.

According to the document, the Vietnamese started "with small bases that later grew larger, on the one hand. On the other, the bases were isolated, and they gradually integrated them. Our process has also been like this. We started with little points in various areas of the country, and these points have been spreading. In the beginning they were isolated; now they are being integrated...They are support bases for the revolutionary movement; they are the embryo of a Proletarian State."

According to the testimony and pamphlets compiled by this reporter, Popular Line's "little points" emerged in this city in 1970 and soon spread to other towns in the Lagunera region, Coahuila, and Durango through the invasion of urban and rural lands. In addition, Popular Line's "cadres" came to dominate most of the schools of the Torreon Unit of the Autonomous University of Coahuila (UAC). During a second expansion phase in the mid-1970's the movement

spread to Monterrey, Monclova, Durango, Valle del Yaqui (Sonora), Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Hidalgo, and the Chiapas jungle.

Popular Line, also known as the Mass Line, had the support of around 12 priests in the Lagunera region; they helped out in the efforts at consciousness-raising and organization among colonia [urban settlement] residents and peasants.

"We supported them because we saw it as organizational work, as furthering the common good, as a search for answers to the problems of the poorest people. It was overt work. We remained discreet in some matters, but there was no underground activity or apologies for violent solutions," several of these priests say.

Father Benigno Martinez says that brigade members of Mass Line penetrated the Chiapas jungle on the express invitation of the bishop of the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz: "He was in Torreon, saw the work that they were doing, and liked it...And he invited them into Chiapas. That was in late 1976." Two years before, Bishop Ruiz had said no to the Torreon Group, Father Mardonio told Guillermo Correa last September (PROCESO 880).

The same source says that the "visible heads" of the Mass Line movement are Adolfo Orive, the current director of training of the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), and Hugo Andres Araujo, a PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] deputy and leader of the confederation: "The one we had the most contact with was Hugo Andres, because he practically lived in La Laguna, although he traveled a lot. Orive, in contrast, showed up from time to time. Neither of the two liked to keep a high profile; they did not want to appear in the press or anything like that." Gustavo Gordillo, the current deputy secretary of the SRA [Secretariat of Agrarian Reform], was prominently involved in the Yaqui Valley; he later wrote about his experiences in his book 'Campesinos al asalto del cielo' [Peasants Attacking Heaven]."

For a long time, says Father Benigno, "we believed naively that Araujo and Orive did not have political contacts. We thought that they were acting independently. We realized later, especially after 1976, that they have political godfathers...."

A native of Mexico City, where he graduated from the National School of Economics of UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico] (the 64-69 generation, according to the Biographical Dictionary of the Mexican Government), Araujo de la Torre settled in Torreon in 1970. He began working as a professor in the economics department, which at the time was part of the Humberto Perez Hinojosa School of Business and Management of the UAC (Perez Hinojosa was a Popular Line activist). For a month now he has been the PRI president in this municipality.

By 1971, the Popular Line philosophy, contained in a thin book called "Hacia una politica popular" [Towards a Popular Line], was already making the rounds in university circles, to which this reporter belonged. The 48-page text clarifies in its introduction that this is the second edition of a document that was originally written "by student brigade members for student brigade members. It was even written on the basis of a whole series of implicit assumptions about the student movement and severely criticizes certain tendencies that posed a very direct threat to the movement back in November 1968."

"Why publish it again then? The fact is that the document is a text suited to the present moment, inasmuch as it tells us what must be done urgently: to join with the masses to pursue a grass-roots policy with them. But it is also a text for the long term in that it proposes a grass-roots policy as a general political line to transform Mexico...This time the document is designed not only for students but for every Mexican who sincerely wants to engage in politics with the lower classes."

Through its brigade members, most of them university students, Popular Line steadily penetrated urban centers, particularly among colonia residents who lacked housing and public utilities. In 1972 it established its first "social support base": the Tierra y Libertad colonia. It was later joined by other colonias in the eastern outskirts of the city, including Francisco Villa and Division del Norte. In the nearby city of Gomez Palacio, the Ricardo Flores Magon, Ruben Jaramillo, and Jacinto Canek colonias were organized.

Father Jesus de la Torre, who helped organize these colonias and is currently in charge of public relations for the Torreon diocese, recalls how he had made contact with Popular Line: "Father Jose Batarse and I hosted a TV program, called Sign of the Times, in which we addressed social and political issues. It was an open program, so much so that we even criticized the waste during Luis Echeverria's presidential campaign. I assume that Adolfo Orive heard about us through this program; he sought us out and proposed that we work together."

He and other priests "were already doing work in very poor colonias. We were helping people organize to meet their needs. We started running into university brigade members...and we managed to get along, although not without some tension. Little by little we gained the ability to argue with them and we had it out on some issues. We cared about the people, not a given political line. What we saw was that all these joint efforts led to the development of a very broad solidarity movement and a very strong motivation to stay involved, which to us was inspired more by the Book of the Apostles than by Maoist texts."

The Popular Line people "were, I thought, quite studious, quite quick in analyzing the times, dogmatic on some issues. They were systematic, very pedagogical; they analyzed everything, from the president's reports to the pope's encyclicals...I never heard either the brigade members or Orive or Araujo talk in favor of weapons as an answer to problems, and I am not aware that they engaged in underground activities. To be sure, they acted with discretion, especially Araujo, who used to say that he had to be careful because he was not from La Laguna."

Benigno Martinez, the current parish priest in Concordia in the municipality of San Pedro de las Colonias, relates that in the early 1970's in the Torreon diocese "several of us priests were very motivated by the proposals in the Medellin documents. We were trying to get the Catholic movements to push forward and find options for a commitment in tune with the demands of the real world. One day Father Jose Batarse went to Durango to give a talk at the university, and in the audience was Adolfo Orive, who became very enthusiastic about what Pepe was saying."

Orive came to Torreon "and explained Popular Line's program to us. We thought that its proposals were very sensible and in accord with those of the Mexican Social Secretary. The point was to invigorate the intermediate bodies, in other words, to encourage people's involvement in decision-making, in opposition to the prevailing custom of having only the leaders of the colonias take action. The point was also to have the people take care of their needs and, at the same time, to grow politically and ideologically. We, as pastors, wanted to see their faith become an element that would revitalize an entire grass-roots process."

Once contact had been established with Orive, Araujo "introduced himself to us as a commissioner around 1971. Because he was a university student, he established connections there and won over people who later developed nicely, among them Miguel Murillo and Salvador Hernandez Velez (now a member of the CNC). We began to spur the worker-grass-roots movement, first by trying to democratize the railway union, Section 27. Then came the Tierra y Libertad colonia, in which what would become the Mass Line was established."

"First we identified the most strongly felt needs, and everyone who was experiencing the problem organized to solve it, not in a pyramid arrangement but rather by acting on the decisions of the rank and file. The colonia residents organized block assemblies, then sector assemblies, and finally came the general assembly, which was the highest body. Once this structure had been established, a brigade was formed with the most advanced elements, whose job was to guide the others. The brigade encouraged discussion and general involvement; it was what was called the ideological apparatus. There was also the political apparatus, which executed all of the resolutions: to go and see certain authorities, to hold rallies, demonstrations, etc."

The highest body of the Popular Line was the so-called Guiding Ideological Organization (OID), which was officially established in 1976 according to the document "Major Issues Concerning Our Line and Our Organization," published in June 1978.

When Mass Line grew, both in this region and elsewhere, Father Benigno says, "the feuds in the top echelon, the OID, began, and two factions appeared in the organization: the so-called Proletariats, led by Adolfo Orive, and the so-called Christian Democrats or Ultrademocrats, represented by Araujo. At that time, Orive was in Monterrey.... The internal struggle led to the abandonment of the working-class colonias, emigration, and the so-called Policy of Two Faces (hit the internal enemy hard but pursue a policy of negotiations with the external enemy)."

"I do not know whether by pursuing this policy Orive and Araujo wound up working together for the government, thus making a turnaround that we still do not understand and that hurt a lot of people who believed in them, especially Araujo. He helped people discover how corrupt the system was...and now he is part of the system. What I do know is that the ideological struggle and the struggle for power that Orive and Araujo waged back then wound up separating them. Orive founded Proletarian Line, and Araujo continued with the Mass Line."

By 1976 the Mass Line had spread to several municipalities in rural La Laguna, in particular San Pedro in colonia Emiliano Zapata and Francisco I. Madero on the small estate Batopilas and in colonia 2 de Marzo. Several priests also helped out in this expansion, most prominent among them Benigno Martinez, Jesus de la Torre, and Jose Batarse. The latter relates that the shining moment during this stage was the struggle of the day laborers at the Batopilas winery (owned by Manuel Suarez). It began as a strike in January of that year to demand decent wages; then the workers invaded the lands in April to ask that they be turned into an ejido, which finally happened on 21 May.

During the invasion at Batopilas, Father Martinez asserts, "we started to realize Hugo Andres' political connections." The action triggered mobilizations in several municipalities, also demanding lands that were in the hands of latifundio holders. In response, the government of Oscar Flores Tapia began cracking down in October 1976. Araujo de la Torre, some 20 peasants, and Fathers Benigno Martinez and Jesus de la Torre were arrested and all thrown in prison in Saltillo. The priests were behind bars for five days, Araujo for two months.

In October 1976 Bishop Ruiz was in Torreon. "And it was on that occasion that he invited those of us in Mass Line to Chiapas," says Concha Castro, who back then was a brigade member and today is coordinating the opening of the CNC's Institute of Rural Area Studies in this city. "Some 12 of us brigade members went to Ocosingo. I was there from September 1977 to December 1988. We took part in forming the 'Quiotic ta Lecontusel' ejido union and we spurred several economic projects."

She says that the work of the Mass Line brigade members in the Chiapas jungle involved "organizing, raising the awareness of people through workshops and seminars, all designed to relieve the most pressing hardships. Our work was overt, not at all clandestine. Neither the communities nor we ever proposed violence as a way of resolving problems. If Father Mardonio says that we planted the ideological seed of the guerrilla war, that is his opinion. We never brought up the issue of the armed struggle, nor did people bring it up with us." She says that Araujo was not in Chiapas.

According to newswoman Olga Quirarte, who at that time was news chief for the paper LA OPINION, Araujo, his wife Carmen, and a lot of university students "went into the Chiapas jungle. Some returned very soon. Others, like

Hugo Andres and Carmen, stayed for a few months. It was a sort of great March, an imitation of the one that Mao did into Beijing. When the Chiapas mosquitoes got the best of them, they left. It was the big pullback of 1968. There were not guerrillas; they were people who went to support the most backward people in La Laguna."

Orive, Araujo Remarks

94CA0097C Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish
10 Jan 94 pp 28-29

[Article by Manuel Robles]

[Text] The leader of the National Peasant Confederation (CNC), Hugo Andres Araujo, said that he was willing to have all leaders of the confederation investigated to clear up any links with the Zapatist National Liberation Army. Adolfo Orive, the CNC's director of training, denied that he had contributed to the violence in Chiapas, asserting that "a paramilitary group is using the peasants to set them at odds" and clarifying that his presence more than 15 years ago in Chiapas "is just history."

"We always promoted peasant economic organizations all over the country, but we have nothing to do with the violence in Chiapas," says Orive, the founder and head of Proletarian Line, a Maoist organization that is prominent in teacher struggles in Oaxaca and worker struggles in Monclova, Coahuila, and that "influenced" Chiapas political parties and peasant groups as of 1974, according to Mardonio Morales, a Jesuit priest who has lived for more than 30 years in the Lacandon Forest (PROCESO 888).

Orive explains that a week after Mardonio Morales said that he [Orive] and Hugo Andres Araujo paved the way years ago for the emergence of the guerrillas in Chiapas, the vicar general of the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Gonzalo Ituarte Verduzco, denied the charge.

Ituarte said that he met Orive when the latter was indeed in Chiapas, promoting credit unions and holding dialogues with peasants. "I am not aware of the rest. I do not know of his record as an official" (PROCESO 881).

Last September, the Jesuit priest revealed the existence of guerrilla groups in Chiapas, after asserting that the Torreon Group, whose visible leaders were Orive and Hugo Andres Araujo, had planted the ideological seed in 1974.

On Tuesday 4 March at the Agrarian Reform House, as a meeting, chaired by Araujo, about the impact of GATT on the country's farm sector was about to begin, Orive declined to go into detail about his work in Chiapas, although he did agree to talk about the charges against him:

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of newsmen who latch onto labels, which I imagine are very appealing...So there is really not much to talk about."

A nervous man of few words, the CNC official says that he worked in Chiapas 15 or 16 years ago, when he set up a credit union.

"That is history. It was a long time ago. All of it is in writing back there."

He was asked what he thought about Mardonio's comments and whether it was true that through those peasant organizations he contributed to the violence in Chiapas. He denies it, asserting:

"Otherwise, I would not be here. And that is not all. In documents from those people, when we were there, 15 years ago, they criticized us severely for being pro-government. The people of Chiapas know all this."

"So you had nothing to do with it?"

"Absolutely not. Our line is a public line, a very obvious one. We always promoted peasant economic organizations all over the republic. We never had anything to do with violence. Obviously we think that the rule of law, which has been violated, ought to be respected, that the peasants are being used to set them at odds...Because the problems of the peasants are one thing, and a paramilitary group that is using them is another."

Orive is in a hurry to join the meeting.

"What about the formation of the Proletarian Line groups...."

"That is all history. Let me get to the meeting."

"How do you see the situation in Chiapas?"

"It is stable, stable."

Also on 4 March, Hugo Andres Araujo stated that he and some of his colleagues promoted "successful economic organizations" in Chiapas.

He said that he knew "all of the Chiapas organizations" and that the first ones to come out against violence in Chiapas were Pajal, ARIC, and the Union of Unions, among others, which were "formed back in those years but are now without external guidance."

And he voiced this complaint:

"Now they want to keep quoting me...I do not want to get into a debate because it is irrelevant. The results of the work are there to see. My training inside the CNC has mainly been in economic organizations; today, it is in the economic and the political area."

He explained that he did most of his work in the La Laguna Region, Tamaulipas, Sonora, and San Luis Potosi ("which I can indeed talk about"), and he reiterated: "Many colleagues who formed those organizations are today leaders of municipal committees, mayors, or leaders of leagues that I am called upon to head today."

He then added:

"This clarification is in order because I will answer for all my work and its results. But it makes no sense for them to attack me now, really...What I will accept is that for 25 years I have been committed to the country's peasant organizations."

A day later, in an interview with the news program "Desde Mexico, Buenas Noches" [Good Night From Mexico City] on the Azteca TV Network, the CNC leader said that he was

willing to have all CNC leaders investigated "to clarify any ties with the rebel group that took up arms in Chiapas."

Lastly, he clarified that the investigation should not be limited to the CNC but should instead include "all areas related to the state of Chiapas." And he asserted that if culprits are found, "the law should be enforced."

Gustavo Gordillo de Anda, the current undersecretary of agrarian reform and another of the founders and leaders of the peasant organizations, explains in his 1988 book "Campesinos al asalto del cielo; de la expropiacion estatal a la apropiacion campesina":

"Mass Line or Proletarian Line has been a political faction that has opposed the party framework which emerged from the 1968 student movement and since then has done political work in major social movements."

His book, which relates the experience of the Coalition of Collective Ejidos of the Yaqui or Mayo Valleys in Sonora, clarifies that the faction's main goal, in contrast to leftist parties, was "that its political activities would not conform to instructions from outside the mass movement."

It adds: "The Popular Action Movement arose in the late 1970's out of a confluence of union groups, intellectuals, and activists in the peasant movement. Subsequently, along with four other political organizations, it began what later led to the formation of the Unified Socialist Party of Mexico."

Raul Salinas, Camacho Solis Cited

94CA0097D Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 899, 24 Jan 94 pp 26-29

[Article by Antonio Jaquez]

[Text] Monterrey, Nuevo Leon—Popular Line (PP) emerged on the eve of the 1968 student rebellion in the Federal District, made its presence felt through brigades during that movement, later dispersed after the 2 October massacre in Tlatelolco, regrouped the following year, and again through brigade members, penetrated many communities around the country, including the Chiapas jungle, during the 1970's, some of the founders of the group have revealed.

College students, mainly from the UNAM's National School of Economics (the 1964-69 generation), came together to form PP and get it off the ground. Some of them were Alberto Anaya, Hugo Andres Araujo, Rolando Cordera, and Gustavo Gordillo, under the intellectual leadership of Adolfo Orive, who was their professor. Also contributing to the expansion of PP, with financial support, were officials in the governments of Luis Echeverria and Jose Lopez-Portillo, some of whom were members of that generation and are currently in the Salinas cabinet.

This information came to PROCESO from Agustin Acosta, Alberto Anaya, and Hector Camero, who founded one of the PP's strongholds, the Land and Liberty Popular Front, in this city. Interviewed separately, the three agreed that the PP never had a well-defined organization and that its growth led to fierce internal squabbling, which ultimately split it into two major blocs: Mass Line and Proletarian Line, led respectively by Araujo and Orive.

The distant forerunner of Land and Liberty, Costa related, was the movement that emerged in the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon against the increase in fees in 1967. Acosta, then a student in the Department of Philosophy and Letters, was involved in the formation of the Coordinator of Preparatory Schools, which sought to expand the student movement with an eye towards incorporating it into grass-roots movements. The goal was achieved three years later when a group of college students backed 400 colonia residents from Topo Chico in their invasion of some lands, on which Land and Liberty was later to emerge. "We invaded...and three days later they pounded us out of there."

Nevertheless, he continued, "we realized that we had a gold mine there and that we had to start working in an organized fashion." The government, he explained, had the workers and peasants under control, but had neglected the new residents who were arriving in droves from the countryside and had no options. We saw that we could slip in there. We studied the situation...and we prepared to invade once again. On 30 August 1971 we invaded the first colonia in the group that later formed the Land and Liberty Popular Front, colonia Martires de San Cosme."

Some months before, he recalled, Marcos Cruz, who was a PP brigade member in Durango, arrived in this city. He gave us a lecture, saying: 'We are doing the same thing. We have a lot in common. We ought to work together.' And he left us the document that you talked about in PROCESO (897), 'Hacia una Politica Popular,' so that we could study it.'' Then came Alberto Anaya, another brigade member in Durango: "He gave us the same speech and asked us to join the organization. Which one? I asked...The fact was that there was no such organization; there were just scattered groups of brigade members. He then asked me whether I wanted to know 'the guy who has the whole story...' and I told him I did. This was how Adolfo Orive first came here. We had our first official meeting in April 1971. He recommended that we step up our political work, that we become more professional, that there was funding for this. And that was what happened."

Both Anaya and Cruz, who served as federal deputies in the 1988-1991 Legislature representing the PMS [Mexican Socialist Party]-OIR-Mass Line coalition, later left Durango "because we called them back as reinforcements, but also because most of the cadres that they had over there split and joined the guerrillas. Many joined the 23 September Communist League."

Acosta recalls that in 1968 Acosta was in a postgraduate program on economic planning at the Advanced Teachers College in Paris. "He lived through May 1968 in France and, showing great intuition, sensed the coming worldwide revolt; he came back to Mexico in early July of that year and started giving economics classes at UNAM. His philosophy was quite well developed; it was Maoist, a product of the studies that he had done on the People's Cultural Revolution in China, particularly with Professor Charles

Bettelheim, who was his adviser, the president of the French-Chinese Friendship Association, and the main Marxist theoretician of that revolution."

Orive, the son of Adolfo Orive Alva, the secretary of water resources under Miguel Aleman, had graduated as a civil engineer from UNAM in 1963. His thesis was entitled "Modern planning techniques for the comprehensive development of the Grijalba River Basin," which already evinced his interest in solving specific problems facing the country.

When the student movement erupted, Acosta said, "a lot of brigades were formed, and the factions began to multiply: the Communist Party, the Trotskyites, the Maoists...The latter had just emerged; its source was the Espartaco Communist League. The factions came together in the brigades, and the so-called Coalition of Emiliano Zapata Brigades was formed. It was the one that issued the first version of the document "Towards a Popular Line" (Originally "For a Popular Line"). Orive wrote it up, pursuant to a consensus among university professors, mostly in economics, among them Araujo, Gordillo, and Anaya."

The Brigades Regroup

After the crackdown on the student movement, the brigade members scattered. Orive regrouped them in 1969, and a decision was made to implement the principles of the PP, a task that began the following year in several regions around the country. The first place was indigenous communities in Guerrero, Chiapas, and Oaxaca. They "did almost social-welfare work, sending in medical brigades, for example. Back then there was a lot of discussion about the best way to integrate with the masses...and splinter groups kept forming, later giving rise to other organizations, such as the Mexican Party of the Proletariat, which Gustavo Gordillo headed."

Anaya, a current leader of the Labor Party in this state and president of the Land and Liberty Popular Front, confirmed that the PP emerged "before 1968. It was based on Maoist principles concerning the so-called mass line, which basically says that everything has to come from the decisions of the people, on the basis of which a line of action is developed."

He pointed out that the PP did its work in three stages. The first was "integration with the masses and it ran from mid-1968 to 1971. The second was mobilization of the masses, from 1971 to 1976. The third was organization and consolidation of the mass groups and the construction of social support bases; we are still doing this work." The movement spread at first to Durango, Monterrey, Bahia de Banderas in Nayarit, the Yaqui Valley in Sonora, Las Truchas in Michoacan, Torreon, Monclova, Tlaxcala, and Zacatecas.

He explained that "the regions into which we went had been selected according to their political profitability, that is to say, the ones in which the people were willing to become involved."

The selection was also made on the basis of "Orive's political contacts and interests within the State apparatus," says Hector Camero, the current leader of the Land and Liberty Civil Association, a group that split from the Front that Anaya heads. For example, he notes, brigade members went to Las Truchas because the iron and steel plant was run by Orive's father, and they went to Bahia de Banderas because Orive himself worked there.

During the time that Orive worked in Monterrey, he adds, "we realized more clearly that he had political contacts at the highest level, including President Echeverria and his interior secretary, Mario Moya Palencia. Besides drafting PP documents, Orive was explicitly charged with raising funds for the movement, and we brigade members had only hints of where they came from. For example, he brought in vehicles from Las Truchas. Orive's and Anaya's contact man with Echeverria was the rector of the UANL, Luis Eugenio Todd."

Through Todd, Camero contends, Echeverria supported some of Land and Liberty's projects.

Acosta, who at present has his own law practice, says that Orive had "direct ties with Echeverria and was very good friends with his eldest son, Luis Echeverria Zuno; they studied together in Paris. As of 1971 Adolfo was very much involved in the Bahia de Banderas Trust. He did the organizing; I was there for four months."

Later, "we realized that other politicians were supporting the movement. In 1975 some of us brigade members were in the Huasteca Hidalguense [the Hidalgo State portion of the Huasteca region]. It was a dangerous zone, owing to the presence of the caciques' white guards, like the Austrias, so we needed cover for our work. We got it from Raul Salinas de Gortari, the director of rural roads for the SAHOP (Secretariat of Human Settlements and Public Works), who introduced us as researchers. Another who backed us was Emilio Lozoya; I do not recall what post he held at the time, but I once went with Orive to pick up money at his office."

"Humberto Perez Hinojosa, who was working with Araujo in La Laguna, once invited me to Manuel Camacho Solis's home in the Federal District. There were a lot of people there whom we had to tell what we were doing because of the financial support they were giving. That kind of thing bothered me. I felt like a clown, but Orive justified it...Lozoya and Camacho also studied economics at UNAM; hence their relationship with Orive and other members of that generation. The fact is that this support enabled us to maintain a roster of around 300 professional brigade members throughout the country from 1976 to 1979."

Camero recalls that in late 1975 "Orive settled here; we ourselves asked him to do so, to integrate with the masses, because he would only visit occasionally on the pretext that he had to raise funds. His presence was ill-fated; the cultural revolution that he advocated led to the death of six colonia residents on 18 February 1976."

Orive began his "cultural revolution" here with the argument that we had to wage a battle to the death against Social Democracy, represented by Anaya, because it put the leaders above the masses. The masses, Orive said, are the ones that must lead movements. He indicated that the

leaders who do not teach these methods are bourgeois Social Democrats who must be swept away by the masses. In this way he carried the ideological struggle to bitter, terrible extremes."

Against this backdrop a problem arose in colonia San Angel, which is between colonias Francisco Villa and Tierra y Libertad, when some patrolmen arrested a group of colonia residents on charges that they had stolen electrical equipment: "We went to help our comrades. The patrolmen called for reinforcements, and just when we had reached an agreement with the police to release them, residents of colonia Francisco Villa showed up and began provoking them. They were people whom Orive controlled; he called them 'red guards.' The police shot at them, killing six."

He charges: "Orive sent those comrades to their death. We did not criticize him publicly at the time, but we did complain to him in private. We told him that his cause had brought death. He said: 'Revolutions shed blood.' The fact is that his goal was to sweep away the leaders here."

After the slayings, Acosta says, the grass-roots movement posted "huge growth, in this city and in others, which also caused the organization to grow excessively...and the internal feuding to intensify. After the ideological battle that he had with Anaya in Monterrey, which in the end was just a struggle for control, Adolfo maliciously saw that the situation could be repeated in La Laguna, where Araujo was the natural leader. Orive himself had bequeathed that influence to him, just as he did with Anaya in Monterrey, but his disciples turned out to be cheeky. The fact is that Orive maneuvered to get Araujo to go to the Huasteca Potosina [the San Luis Potosi State portion of the Huasteca region]."

Araujo got to the region in early 1977, shortly after being released from prison in Saltillo, where he had been held for two months on orders from Governor Oscar Flores Tapia. "He arrived in the Huasteca Potosina with a lot of backing. His political contacts were very obvious by then, most notably with Raul Salinas de Gortari. The so-called Land and Liberty Camp was founded there, comprising a lot of ejidos near Ciudad Valles. Some of us brigade members settled in the Mezquital Valley, more or less where the Huasteca Potosina and Hidalguense meet. It was very difficult work, in communities as backward as the ones in Chiapas...and around which the army started building heliports as a precaution."

Meanwhile, Acosta continues, "Orive settled in Chiapas, where he had been making contact with religious groups since 1974. He lived there from 1978 to 1988. His presence has great significance in the region, given its characteristics. Suffice it to say that in 1988 he organized an assembly at which some 2,500 Indians got together to discuss their problems. But I doubt whether Orive planted the ideological seed for the guerrilla war that has now erupted. He is very cool towards such things. What could have happened is that some of his people broke off and became radicalized, just like what happened with the network of catechizers that outstripped Bishop Samuel Ruiz."

Anaya: "The self-styled Proletarian Line, headed by Orive, worked in Chiapas to build social support bases by organizing the indigenous peasants economically and socially. He never proposed the armed struggle as a solution. He sought to combat the caciques and great estates and fought to start solving problems with the Chiapas governments, which at least over the past 15 years have been characterized by authoritarianism, political narrow-mindedness, and intolerance."

Camero concludes: "It would be going too far to say that Popular Line planted the ideological seed of the Chiapas guerrilla war. At least not its leaders, although some of its people may have split off and become radicalized. But I do not think it was people like Orive and Araujo. They showed their true faces a long time ago when they joined right in with the State apparatus. There is a reason why they are together in the CNC, to which in one way or another they were always linked, probably as part of a project that Echeverria started and the Salinas brothers later picked up again."

Indian-Language Religious Materials

94CA0097E Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 901, 7 Feb 94 pp 22-23, 25

[Article by Enrique Maza]

[Text] The year was 1972. In Chilon, a Tzeltal area, the Morales Elizalde brothers, Mardonio and Ignacio, were enthusiastically translating the Bible into Tzeltal. They wanted to translate Exodus before any other book. Ignacio would say: It talks about the escape from Egypt, the move from servitude to freedom, the rebellion of the slaves, and their emancipation. It talks about the quest for the promised land. And they translated the Book of the Jewish Exodus.

In 1987, in the heart of the Lacandon Forest, Tzeltales, Tzotziles, Choles, Tojolabales, and mestizos from 117 ejidos and 24 small villages gathered together in a multiethnic organization with its own unique identity. It was the exodus of the Mayas in search of the promised land, a new land, and a new life.

Las Canadas is a portion of the jungle in which the Union of Unions established itself in the late 1980's. It was formed by some 6,000 families living on ejidos and in small villages in the ravines, valleys, and plateaus of the eastern mountain range in the state of Chiapas. Ninety percent of its members had been peons on the corn, cane, ranching, and coffee estates in the municipality of Ocosingo. The other 10 percent are Indians from the north and Highlands of Chiapas.

The permanently resident rural estate peons left the estates and headed for the Desierto de la Soledad. It was the start of the exodus in the 1930's, a steady march that intensified in the 1960's and lasted into the 1980's. They populated the jungle and organized in it.

Researcher Xochitl Leyva Solano has studied this exodus and its causes in a book the first version of which was presented as a paper at the Second International Mayanist

Congress, which the Center for Mayan Studies and the Yucatan Institute of Culture organized in Merida in August 1992. A later version is summarized here.

The sense of community among the Indians is born mainly of two social practices: one that is pastoral and the other that is political and ideological. Pastoral activities were promoted in the jungle, drawing their inspiration from the major Church events of the 1960's, particularly the Second Vatican Council in the early part and the Medellin Bishops Conference towards its end, as well as liberation theology.

The political and ideological action was conducted by political factions and groups that emerged after the 1968 student movement, which went beyond partisan and electoral political activity with the idea of going to the people and helping them. Many of their members were from the urban middle class. They were social workers who joined the social struggles, spurred the rise of independent peasant movements, or established themselves in the guerrilla movements in Guerrero, Chihuahua, and Sonora. In the cities of Monterrey, Durango, Torreon, and Chihuahua they helped organize the working-class colonias and urban social movements. They were groups like Union of the People (UP), Popular Line (PP), and the Guiding Ideological Organization (OID).

The Religious Community

Pastoral action stemmed from the urgent need to create an identity and a sense of community, of belonging. First among the larger group, the poor, and then among a more specific group, "those of us who constitute a community," the collection of men and women who live in the same colonia and share an activism, a creed, a system of office-holding, a territory, a history, roots.

Liberation theology led them to analyze the real world, as a starting point, and to discover that "man has been crushed and dispossessed," and to demand that he be liberated from such oppression in today's world, in accordance with the Gospel of Saint Luke: "The Lord has sent me to announce the good news to the captive and to liberate all the oppressed." Hence the commitment to transform today's world, in which the poor are victims "of structural domination," in the words of Bishop Samuel Ruiz: "If we follow the option of the Gospel, we have to dismantle the structures that foster domination."

The permanently resident rural estate peons and the peons who emigrated into the jungle echoed this assertion and emphasized the social and ethnic distinction between them and their bosses. They were also able to identify with other Chiapas Indians with whom they had common problems: the Choles, Tzeltales, Tzotziles, and Tojolabales, as was made evident at the Indian Congress of 1974 in San Cristobal de las Casas, where four shared problems were identified: land, trade, health care, and education. The congress had been a government initiative, but it wound up as a place where the Indians of Chiapas came together.

Liberation theology was the escape hatch from a past of "oppression and misery" on the estates. In the new colonias in the jungle they had to break drastically with the past and opt for a liberating alternative. They saw their days on the estates as an era of serfdom and poverty, toil and cruel masters. Hence the peasant war and liberation. In the pastoral action of the diocese they found the language and inspiration they needed to struggle against this past and rebuild their identity.

Liberation theology was complemented by the text of the Bible, especially the Book of Exodus: "The communities in the jungle were living their exodus." This is the book that tells of the rebellion of the Jewish slaves in Egypt and their exodus through the desert until they found a land on which they could settle and live, "the promised land." God ordered them to leave. From 1972 to 1974 the Book of Exodus was translated into Tzeltal, and there were discussions in the communities about freedom, faith, hope, and love. At first the missionaries summarized the material. Later, Indian catechizers did the writing. The lessons were then compiled in a catechism entitled "We Are Seeking Liberty" in the Tzeltal language. It draws an analogy between the migration into the jungle and the Jewish exodus. The sense of "we" thus emerged.

The catechism: "The Lord said to the Israelites when they were living as slaves: 'I have seen the miserable state of my people. And now the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad where milk and honey flow.' God wants us to depart for freedom like the Jewish people of old, who lived in the lands of another people, called Egypt. The land did not belong to them; they worked as slaves and suffered much hardship. Then God spoke to the heart of one of the leaders: 'I have seen the miserable state of my people, I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. I have come to free you from your suffering and I am going to bring you to a better land.' And God said to Moses: 'I order you to bring my people out of Egypt.'"

"God wants us to leave everything that crushes us. The word of God tells us that as a community we must leave to seek freedom. If we seek betterment and freedom, God will be with us. When the Israelites lived as slaves, they had to leave and fight for their freedom. When our forebears lived as servants, they too had to struggle together to win their lands. They were men of great faith. True freedom has not come yet. We must gather strength in our hearts and struggle and suffer much yet. We must fight against poverty, hunger, and injustice" (Exodus 3:7-12; Catechism 28, 51, 78, 106).

Expectations of a "new life" in the "promised land" in the jungle had been created. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, speaks of the "new man." The Tzeltal catechism echoes him: "The new man is not a man alone, but rather a community man, united with all his brothers by the Spirit. Together we have a single thought, a single job, a single heart with one and the same Hope (Catechism 114)."

A reaffirmation of life in the community was needed in the search for an identity and new methods of organization. These reflections focused on issues such as the land and food, God's law and man's law, a given way of life (culture),

the need for collective work, and shared decision-making. "Thought" is an individual's greatest strength and leads to action, "praxis." Indian culture was reaffirmed.

The residents of a colonia, meeting in a plenary session, issued regulations governing all spheres of life in society. "Through all that we do as a community we form a single heart in Christ. The work and love of the community is what brings us to freedom. The community is something that we must build day by day" (Catechism 30, 83, 101).

It was revolutionary to assert that social power was to be found in the thoughts of pioneer Indians. The catechizing process was a threat to the status quo. All were encouraged to become involved. What was needed was to express one's thoughts, to speak out, to read the word of God, to sing, to debate at the assemblies, to come out for or against resolutions, to erase the differences between ethnic and linguistic groups, to share a utopia: building the kingdom of God on earth, which guided work and life every day. Pastoral activities were eminently political because they threatened the dominant power structure.

The Political Community

After the 1968 movement, a group of professors, students, and workers began waging a different struggle, whose watchword was "Let the people decide for themselves." They had "to integrate into the struggles of the working people, place themselves in service to the people, and help them organize and become more aware, so that they could carry forward their struggles." Live with the masses, stand by them in their daily struggle, and give them resources that will help them confront the "bourgeois, exploitative" enemy.

Activists from the Union of the People began arriving in the jungle in 1976 to work with the Catholics, pioneers, and colonia residents for whom the religious groups no longer sufficed to meet their demands for land, services, and infrastructure. Two years later the "northerners," activists from Popular Line, arrived. UP and PP were absorbed by a larger group, the OID. The organization that had called the Indian Congress reached its limit in 1977 and gave way to new political groups: PP, CNPA [National Coordinating Board for the Ayala Plan], CIOAC [Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants], OCEZ [Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization], PST [Socialist Workers Party], and others, which offered viable alternatives in the face of the new realities.

Proletarian Line (LP) arrived in Chiapas in 1978. In the Lacandon Forest it worked with Quiptic (the union of ejidos), with Land and Liberty, and with Peasant Struggle; in Simojovel, Tila, Sabanilla, Huitiupan, and El Bosque, with the ejidos and peons from the regional organization; in La Fraylesca, with the ejidos that had made up the 10 April Peasant Alliance; in Venustiano Carranza and Villas las Rosas, with the Indian community members. It teamed up with students, colonia residents, and workers. In 1979 it joined the struggle of Chiapas teachers. Some authors and analysts blame the LP for the destruction of the regional processes and the disintegration of influential peasant cadres.

Proletarian Line and Mass Line (LM), which were the ideological lifeblood of many political advisers swarming about the jungle, emerged as the result of a split with Popular Line over theoretical and tactical disagreements, mainly with regard to the relations that ought to exist between the rank and file and the leadership. There were also "fundamental disagreements" in the OID.

The political structure superimposed itself on the religious structure, and in spite of serious differences Line reinforced and invigorated the sense of community and the broader methods of organization, such as the unions of ejidos. Line started from the "deeply felt needs of the working people" and defended the idea of joining with the working class, of having the workers, peasants, colonia residents, students, small businessmen, shop clerks, and professionals march together. The Indians living in the jungle were being brought into a movement that went beyond the local level.

A 1979 Line Document says: "We must take part in and lead the struggles of the peasants for land, credit, etc., the struggles of the workers for higher wages, better benefits, against corrupt union bosses, etc., the struggles of the students for better teachers, to democratize education, for school buildings, for scholarships, etc., and the struggles of all social groups and the people in general for better living conditions."

The slogan "of the masses, by the masses, for the masses" meant the involvement of all, the expression of ideas, decision-making, promoting organization. "The people as a whole must take part in decision-making. Such participation means discussing several ideas. A pure struggle of ideas does not help the people; it is an exercise for bourgeois intellectuals. After discussions, decisions must be made. Resolutions and decisions chart the course. Making decisions is a political practice that unites comrades. We must have the broadest democracy, which means the wide-ranging input of ideas and opinions. Based on the people's most deeply felt demands, mass organizations must be formed." It also had its own utopia: a society free of exploiters and exploited.

The two movements, political and religious, ran parallel. The political groups came later, entrenching themselves in the religious movement and giving it a political bent. They both promoted community life and involvement; they established regulations, systems of office-holding, and commissions; they called for radical change spurred by the poor, and shared a utopia: the struggle here and now for a just, egalitarian society.

They had their differences, though. As far as the political leaders were concerned, the process was "guided." To the theologians, the process was "accompanied." The key point to the theologians was to revitalize Indian culture. As far as the political leaders were concerned, the revolutionary subjects were the proletariat, dispossessed peasants, and the working class. The mutual accusations were ongoing and obvious. Their differences of opinion reached the point that the Indians in the jungle expelled the northerners in the late 1970's.

The Agrarian Conflict

Various timber companies had developed the Lacandon Forest last century. Later, the lands there were sold off, subdivided, or designated as national property. Some years into this century, great forest estates coexisted with great cattle estates, which the Indians called "fincas." As they moved into the jungle, the Indians of the exodus harmed powerful interests, including those of the government.

It was Luis Echeverria who decreed that communal assets be returned. Some 60 Lacandon families and some 30 colonias of Mayan Indians, comprising about 4,000 families in all, the Indians of the exodus, lived in the jungle. In a presidential decree Echeverria "returned" the entire Lacandon Forest, 614,321 hectares, to the Lacandon Indians, ignoring the Mayas. The president spoke of restitution to the "rightful owners." Historians have proven that there is no continuous link between the Lacandons of history and today's Lacandons. The Tzeltales, Tzotziles, and Choles were excluded and legally expelled in 1972.

Hiding behind the presidential decree were business and timber interests, especially the National Finance Company (Nafinsa), which through the Lacandon Forestry Company, S.A. (Cofolasa) wanted to haul off the mahogany and cedar. No sooner had the jungle been deeded over to the Lacandons than Cofolasa signed a contract with them for some 35,000 cubic meters a year of timber (around 10,000 trees a year) over a 10-year period without a set price.

The government said that the Mayas had to be relocated in order "to preserve the forest." Some 20 colonias agreed to a relocation, thanks to the president's promise that they would have secure land tenure, utilities, and infrastructure; he never kept his promise.

Echeverria's decree was published in 1972. There was a pressing need to crowd them together again. Moves against the Mayas were not long in coming. The Indian assemblies, the discussions, and the decision-making then followed. They decided to reject relocation. This was the rallying point around which Quiptic, the Union of Ejidos, and the Union of Unions were formed and took action. The entire organizational structure that had been tried out day after day for such a long time was taking action and it grew strong in defense of the new land, which represented a new life, both of which had been shattered by presidential decree.

A new identity had been born. The Indians' experience of religion and politics charted the course for the agrarian struggle that was waged in the 1970's and 1980's. The Indian Congress had set the process in motion in October 1974, and it culminated in January 1994 with the armed uprising.

Bishop Ruiz Testimony

94CA0097F Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 904, 28 Feb 94 pp 6, 9-11

[Article by Ignacio Ramirez]

[Text] The left-wing political groups that came to Chiapas from Torreon took advantage of the religious infrastructure created by the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas and carried on their work in the Highlands and the Lacandon Forest using language that was not only Marxist but atheist as well. They gave rise to the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (OCEZ). Close to 200 catechizers went into 200 communities to spread the new ideas and set up economic and political organizations. They had already changed their way of thinking. Later came the repression and institutionalized violence. It was in this context that the Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN) issued its declaration of war.

This was, in summary, the account that Bishop Samuel Ruiz gave of the way that the social movement which gave rise to the EZLN was born. He was speaking at the meeting that the members of the Plural Commission of the Standing Committee of the Congress of the Union held in San Cristobal de las Casas on 13 January with bishops from the southern Pacific coast region. The commission had been formed to analyze the events in Chiapas.

The members of the commission reported that they held this and other meetings a few days after the outbreak of fighting on 1 January. They did not reveal their substance, however. PROCESO now has a copy of the shorthand version of the talks between lawmakers and bishops.

Attending the meeting, among other legislators, were Benjamin Gonzalez Roaro, Jorge Tovar Montanez, Blanca Ruth Esponda, Juan Ramiro Robledo, Jorge Moscoso, Alvaro Salazar, Adolfo Kunz Bolanos, Victor Manuel Tinoco Rubi, Jesus Martin del Campo, and Alejandro Encinas. Representing the Ecclesiastic Commission were, in addition to Samuel Ruiz, Felipe Aguirre Franco and Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, the bishops of Tuxtla Gutierrez and Tapachula respectively; Adolfo Suarez Rivera, the archbishop of Monterrey and president of the Mexican Episcopate; the archbishop of Oaxaca, Hector Gonzalez; the bishop of Coatzacoalcos, Carlos Talavera, and the Dominican bishop, Raul Vera.

During the meeting Samuel Ruiz warned of the danger that once peace has been achieved, "if the military takes a military approach, they will observe the subsequent pacification stage in a military way, and there could be a witch hunt. I am not emphasizing anything; I just want to point out this risk."

"If we are unable, right now, to see things in a positive light," he added, "if we are going to look at our brothers with prejudice, then obviously we are going to be the first ones to hamper a reconciliation...This requires an attitude of fairness, an attitude of honesty, an attitude of understanding, and an attitude of humaneness, with a change on our part in order to break with the structures that are hurting them." Chiapas is not just the Zapatist National Liberation Army, was the comment at the meeting, during which criticism of all sorts was voiced of the Mexican political system, neoliberal policies, and the FTA, inasmuch as the conflict is not only with the group that has taken up arms "but also has other areas of concern in the different spheres of government and society."

Bishop Felipe Arizmendi:

"The answer to why all this happened is mainly poverty, exploitation, and injustice...The fact is that the entire economic system in which we live, not just in Mexico but all over the world, the entire neoliberal system of the market economy has to be reassessed, and it has to be a serious reassessment at the level of the world economy, not just nationally and not just in Chiapas. What is happening to us? These mechanisms are forgetting about the poorest people. All this is for the big businessmen, the big power groups. And what about all these people? In general, it is the type of economy that we have in the world, which is not an economy of solidarity, an economy of sharing, of justice. It is an economy of seeing who can make more any way he can. We must not forget this, because if we only take an Alka-Seltzer for the problem and fail to treat it more seriously, sooner or later it is going to explode everywhere."

"What do you know about the direction of this armed movement? Is it primarily local, specifically in terms of the top echelon?" PARM [Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution] Deputy Adolfo Kunz Bolanos asked Samuel Ruiz.

The bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas diocese gave a wide-ranging account of how the social movement that led to the actions of the EZLN was born. The following is a summary of the verbatim transcription of his remarks:

That is a difficult question, because I do not know the answer. I am going to say what I know.

I will go far back. When I arrived here, I knew that Castro Ruz had gotten training in the Chiapas jungles and that he had even been in Yucatan. This was mentioned there with great admiration.

During Echeverria's term there were two guerrilla forces in the jungle: a right-wing guerrilla force, maintained by the left, and a left-wing guerrilla force, maintained by the right. I mention this merely to point out that the situation in the jungle, because it is a jungle, was tense. A favorable moment arose, however, and the situation was gotten under control.

There was a pretty strong movement in Torreon, and several agitators were jailed. Bishop Fernando Romo, a friend of mine, was in very close touch with us on occasion. I went there, to Torreon, and marveled at the discipline and organization of the grass-roots forces, which caused quite a serious problem for him that he could find no way to resolve.

I saw that organization over there and, seeing the political backwardness of the community, I said here: When will something like that come to Chiapas and raise people's consciousness? Some of the people who were listening just stared at me because I was talking with someone in that movement. "Some day," he told me, but very cynically. Four months later we saw them here. And very soon they started using our infrastructure. They were supposed to give one poor nun some clothing in a package, and it turned out to be outright subversive propaganda. They lied outrageously to us...That situation was exposed.

They wanted to take over the entire religious structure, the structure of the catechizing religion. Several members of the communities, particularly catechizers, were "hauled off," and some went voluntarily, with different tendencies. So, at a given moment in some places in the Chol Zone, for example, that movement co-opted several communities and turned the hermitages into barns for growing coffee or storing corn.

At the same time, their language was not just Marxist but atheist as well. I was very pained to hear one catechizer say: "I wipe my ass with the Bible." Forgive me for repeating this. But I was terrified at how these people had made a complete turnabout. I also remember hearing the Indians say things like: "We have to begin building a movement, not a political movement but our movement." It was at this point, as far as I can recall, that the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization was born, very near to where we are speaking.

So this became more or less well-known and grew in different areas. The southern Pacific coast region looked on when the time came for the political opening to register parties. And the entire southeast area, including Veracruz and this whole section of Oaxaca and Chiapas, saw the extraordinary emergence of a whole array of political positions, despite the cultural and linguistic barriers, because they were a response to longing of the Indians, of the peasants for specific support at that moment, with the growing awareness that their lands had been snatched from them. Their consciousness was raised, and we ourselves are not far removed from a consciousness-raising effort there.

Two-hundred catechizers went into 200 communities when this situation arose. The catechizers are the ones who reap the harvest of a community's thinking. Their way of thinking had already changed. Imagine what sort of consciousness-raising the communities were undergoing. Economic and political organizations, ejido associations, internal organizations, and cultural groups too emerged.

This is the background to what would be called evangelizing action. It is clear that political decisions and choices were made in the wake of it. I would have been the unhappiest bishop in the world if after 30 years of work there had been no consciousness-raising about the political involvement of the laity.

Several other factors had an influence. Another result was the subsequent repression, because there is institutionalized violence: 15,000 Indians starved to death in Chiapas last year; this is institutional violence. Then came repression in the indigenous areas, and a second wave of violence, and finally a desperate counterviolence, which we call violence without remembering that a previous violence caused it.

The most recent movement and the repression arose in this context. It was so discreet that four days before it began an Indian brother, a father, came to me and said: "Bishop Ruiz, what is going on? My son always obeys me, but he has taken off on me. He is off to liberation, to freedom." It was so discreet that not even families themselves knew who was in the movement or not.

We obviously noticed certain signs. To tell them that what they were thinking was crazy was not possible in historical terms, because desperation is stronger than idleness. We only knew very hypothetically what towns or municipalities they were in. We thought that they were confined to a quite limited area, but in the last few months of the year we got a broader, more alarming picture.

As late as 4 November, when this sacred national emblem was presented to me, I submitted to the authorities the latest report by our Human Rights Center, listing all of the awful violations that had been committed up to then. I put it there along with a medal of the Virgin of Guadalupe. We always made this effort, but they operated so discreetly, I repeat, that although we noticed certain signs, we were never able to see that the movement had external leadership, though I think there is some internal leadership as well. But we cannot therefore say: This is the leadership that is responsible for the reasoning that the Indians are doing about their own hunger-stricken conditions. [end of Ruiz remarks]

Deputy Jorge Tovar of the PPS then asked whether there had been mass bombardments of the population. Samuel Ruiz replied that he had heard of them from parishioners in several towns:

"We do not know how many people died there. We were told of four missing persons in just one community, but I do not know whether they have reappeared. Deputy Blanca Ruth Esponda has told us that we all have to work together to prevent violence. But there is a kind of violence that has nothing to do with the violence of weaponry. It is the other kind of violence, which we have already made a custom, which we have thoroughly accepted, for which we too are to blame: institutionalized violence."

Bishop Suarez Rivera spoke up to say that based on Monsignor Ruiz's explanation, the Zapatist movement is made up of people from Chiapas, "but there must also be people from outside Mexico."

"Monsignor Ruiz himself was telling us that in the past there were suspicions that Fidel Castro Ruiz himself (laughter)...Ruiz and some other people were here...."

Ruiz remarked that people still think that the Indians are mentally retarded: "During the Indian Congress we had to select among 50 candidates who wanted to be translators, all of whom spoke four or five languages besides Spanish. I am giving this background so you know what we are talking about."

He reported that 23 percent of the Guatemalans in the refugee camps have relatives or close friends in Chiapas, according to official figures, and that after their first return to their country, 43 percent had become Mexican.

"In short, what we have seen so far is that there is a single presence and leadership (the EZLN), represented by Subcommander Marcos. There may be some foreigners, we do not deny this, but we would be getting off the track if we thought that since the word for 'hunger' in Tzotzil and Tzeltal is 'huinal' and Marxism calls it class struggle, they mean the same thing."

In response to a question from PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] Deputy Alvaro Salazar, Samuel Ruiz explained how he came to be the mediator in the armed conflict in Chiapas:

"I hastened to give my response because I had already offered to do it. Rigoberta Menchu called me up and said: 'Did you hear what happened?' I became alarmed: 'What happened?' 'Haven't you read LA JORNADA?' 'No, it hasn't come yet. It's four in the afternoon. What happened?, tell me,' I asked her anxiously. She said: 'Well, there's a communique, a fax, proposing me, you, and Julio Scherer as intermediaries.' So, I then tried to get in touch with Julio. He was not in. I left him a message...I would have liked for us to agree on a joint statement about the situation. Because no one received a direct communique, it seems. They did not ask me in writing to mediate. Therefore, I replied not to what they should have sent but to what appeared in the press, because I reacted to the communique.

"When they were here at city hall, it would have been extremely simple, but by the time I offered to mediate, the Zapatists had already left the city. It would have been easy; I was just a few steps away, and communication with the people was extraordinarily good. I gave my sermon on the last day of the year, summarizing the pope's words and talking very vigorously about democracy and peace, without realizing that peace was going to give way to shooting at midnight...."

At the meeting with the deputies and senators Bishop Samuel Ruiz also stated that he had definite suspicions ("I think that these suspicions are strongly confirmed") that there was no fighting in several communities "because the people there are Zapatists in their hearts, although they do not belong. Let us consider how bad the conditions are and to what extent the Indians have progressed. How could this have not exploded years ago, don't you think?"

He then gave another lengthy explanation of the religious conflict between Catholics and Evangelicals in Chiapas. He said that the problem did not arise just a year or two ago; it has been awaiting a solution for 20 years: "It should be made clear that both Catholics and Evangelicals have been displaced by the caciques, who wear religious masks but obviously have political and financial interests. I have my theory. I could be wrong, but we can see that Chiapas is the political springboard for Mexico's Indian movement."

According to Ruiz, the cause of the conflict is the fact that the sects clearly identify those who do not belong to them and have very odd recruitment methods and that some of their members talk about the people whom they fail to recruit with remarks like "they're children of the great harlot," "666, the mark of the beast," and "we're going to burn their little idols on All Saints Day." The reactions have been brutal.

"It finally got to the point that we refused to let them into the religious services on the feast of San Juan Chamula. And then they called in pseudo-bishops. They said to us in so many words: We are from the PRI. We have come here

to help you. And we are not going to ask you for anything, no requirements like the ones Bishop Samuel Ruiz sets."

He said that "other interested parties arrived later. Initially there were 40 people, and later 200, working as spies who followed the Chamulas during their Catholic services and putting their names on a black list. There was a little bit of everything: jailings, torture, killings, taxes, looting, robberies."

"Although the number seems exaggerated, there are 25,000 Chamulas living outside their communities, Catholics and Evangelicals, who preferred to stick to their convictions rather than hold onto their belongings. Our Chamula brothers have borne witness to their martyrdom."

Samuel Ruiz recalled that the pastoral action of San Cristobal diocese has also been blamed for the lack of unity among indigenous communities. He related the following anecdote, involving the Chamula mayor and an Indian:

"Domingo, you have to be patient. You know that things are being taken care of."

"We have been patient for 20 years, sir. Right now our patience has not run out on us yet. What we are running out of is room to live."

Bishop Gonzalez Martinez said that since the middle of last century the authorities have been encouraging the arrival of [Protestant] religious sects in order to weaken the Catholic Church.

"This event has changed Mexico, and we hope that people realize now that in the specific case of Chiapas all sectors must pay attention but also that we have to somehow change the political situation in the state and find common ground among all of the sectors in the state, above all to improve the living conditions of the population," said PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution] Deputy Jorge Moscoso.

He said that he was convinced that the members of the EZLN "are making a very difficult contribution that is being heavily criticized for its methods but not its causes. No one in this country has denounced the underlying causes of this situation. So then, when all is said and done, this obliges us lawmakers and bishops to get together and create a new framework in the country."

PRD Deputy Jesus Martin del Campo explained that the presence of the lawmakers in San Cristobal de las Casas could do much to reinforce the effort and develop a solution that would prevent more Mexicans from dying in this conflict.

Bishop Adolfo Suarez:

"I would like to emphasize, as Bishop Arizmendi was saying here, that only certain sectors in the state are being protected because they are the ones whose voices can exert the most influence. The most vulnerable sectors, such as the ones that we have found in Chiapas, very specifically the Indian people, have even been excluded from legislation that would more justly acknowledge the value of their cultures, their values, and their contribution to the country."

Bishop Carlos Talavera:

"Economic democracy, social democracy, and cultural democracy have already been mentioned. It seems to me that if we really want a shift towards democracy, it must happen in all aspects of life. I, for example, ask myself: Why are there caciques? Why? And why can't we do anything about them?"

Bishop Raul Vera:

"In order to really begin building a more participatory society, which would be the start of a true democracy, in order to really bring about change in Chiapas and throughout the country, we have to make a personal conversion, a change of mind-set, whereby we value the whole individual as an individual, and these individuals themselves can be major players, in their own sphere and with their own resources, to help exalt our country."

Accusations Against Ruiz

94CA0097G Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 904, 28 Feb 94 p 7

[Article by Rodrigo Vera]

[Text] The charges against Samuel Ruiz, the bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, to the effect that he promoted the armed movement in Chiapas, intensified last week in several national publications.

The charge was echoed in editorials, articles, and interviews with priests and Indians displaced by the fighting, mainly in the daily EL UNIVERSAL and the weeklies IMPACTO and SIEMPRE!.

In its 24 February editorial, entitled "The Apostle of the Activism," IMPACTO says:

"In his statements Bishop Ruiz has been on the verge of giving in to his activism and revealing himself as a fundamental part of the machinery that manufactured the Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN), the guerrilla organization in which he may have cloaked his true ambitions. We need not wrack our brains analyzing his statements, observations, recommendations, and 'conciliatory' remarks to realize that Bishop Ruiz runs the risk of being overtaken by emotion and shouting: We won! Or Did I win?"

It goes on to say that Samuel Ruiz "knows more than he is admitting publicly" and that "to achieve his objective the bishop used the hunger and poverty of the Indians."

In the editorial in its 3 March edition IMPACTO says:

"No one should be fooled if the politicized clergyman goes further and seeks to divide up the country for himself. The 'enlightened' bishop has already set the tone and with his hosts of catechizers, diocesans, nuns, and, in short, members of religious orders from here and there, has had an excellent laboratory in which to cultivate the wrath, frustrations, and offensive and denigrating neglect of the

Indians to set them against the government and then harvest the fruit of a forbidden tree."

IMPACTO does not think that either Manuel Camacho Solis ("owing to his personal ambitions") or the Zapatist delegates would dare to "unmask" the bishop and finger him "as a commander of the guerrillas."

In its 2 March issue SIEMPRE! asserts in an editorial that Samuel Ruiz, along with Camacho Solis and Commander Marcos, "have turned the war in the Lacandon Forest into a Hollywood spectacle in which each actor seeks to play the day's leading role."

It sees the Chiapas conflict as "shady and odd," and the manipulation of it by Zapatists and peace-makers "seems more like a theatrical production staged for the mass media than a bloody war the main cause of which is supposedly the social tragedy of the Indian communities."

It concludes:

"Only time will put each of the players who have taken part in this war in their proper place. The central figures in it have been neither the Indians nor Zapata the revolutionary but rather three men who for different reasons are hungry for publicity and power."

In a feature article entitled "Landowner, subversive, and enemy of the middle class. The other face of Don Samuel," SIEMPRE! reveals in the same edition, without citing sources, the properties that the bishop allegedly owns, some of which were used to train the guerrillas:

"Two of the ranches are in the municipality of Ciudad Cuauhtemoc, Chiapas, one called Santa Clara and another La Gloria, previously San Caralampio. There are those who say that the bishop has hundreds of guerrillas hidden at present on this ranch, as they prepare to take action in southeast Mexico.

"The bishop acquired other real estate in the area near the Guatemalan border: Gloria Huanacaston (purchased by someone named Braulio Hernandez); Tepancuapan (bought by Father Alfredo Inda Andrio); La Esmeralda, San Lorenzo, El Naranjillo, El Porvenir I (which is believed to have been used by Guatemalan guerrillas as a hospital and rest area), El Porvenir II (also bought through Father Inda Andrio), the San Pedro ranch, and the Guanajuato ranch."

Last week EL UNIVERSAL published a series of interviews with Indians and priests in which they accused the bishop of promoting the armed struggle.

Diego Andres, the priest in Bochil, Chiapas, indicated that the leader of the EZLN is a former seminarian from the diocese of San Cristobal and that the catechizers, with the support of Samuel Ruiz, have gone around giving military training to believers.

Otilio Lopez Lopez, a former vicar of Ocosingo, related that three years ago he spoke out against the imminent uprising to Jeronimo Prigione, the apostolic nuncio in Mexico, who merely told him that there were a "heap of charges" against Samuel Ruiz but that the Vatican had not yet given him any instructions.

According to him, the Gospel that the San Cristobal bishop is promoting is "ideologized, with pamphleteer phrasing and classist slogans." He cited the names of priests who had to leave because they did not agree with the bishop's line:

Heberto Jose Morales, a former rector of Chiapas Autonomous University, Antonio Patino, Elias Martinez Bulmaro Gordillo, Aurelio Zapata, Cecilio Baraibar, Oscar Macias, and Jose Reyes Angel.

He mentioned others who asked to be transferred to another diocese, among them Pedro Ramuco (today in Zamora), Pablo Arenas, Jose Conrado Ruiz, and Jose Inocencio Galvan (in Guadalajara).

According to EL UNIVERSAL, representatives of more than 8,000 Indians from 35 communities were in Mexico City to try and see Prigione to find out whether Pope John Paul II had replied to the letter in which they complained about Samuel Ruiz, who because they failed to support his "liberation church" "punished" them by refusing them the sacraments.

The letter, which was submitted to the pontiff during his visit to Yucatan last August, said that as a result of the "punishment" imposed by Samuel Ruiz, 460 children had not been baptized, 262 couples had not been married, and 884 persons had not received confirmation; they added that Ruiz's "catechizers are forcing the Indians to sing 'Juan the landless' and '30-30 carbine.'"

The Indian leaders who were interviewed, "Brother Juan" and "Brother Pedro," said of the bishop:

"Don Samuel is a friend of the Zapatists. He organized everything."

Rejection of Accusations

94CA0097H Mexico City PROCESO in Spanish No 906, 14 Mar 94 p 79

[Undated letter to the editor by apparently former priest Oscar Macias]

[Text]

Don Samuel's Priests

The Editor:

I am writing to you to clarify something in Rodrigo Vera's article on page seven of Issue 904 of PROCESO (28 February).

This is in connection with the campaign that EL UNIVERSAL, SIEMPRE!, and IMPACTO are conducting to lay the blame for the armed uprising in the Chiapas Highlands on Samuel Ruiz, the bishop of San Cristobal.

The article says that Father Otilio Lopez Lopez said that several priests from the diocese of San Cristobal left because they disagreed with Bishop Ruiz's pastoral line.

Among the priests it mentions are Oscar Macias, Jose Reyes Rangel, Aurelio Zapata, and Pedro Ramuco.

I disagree completely with Otilio; his assertion is false and deceitful. I am Father Oscar Macias. I worked in the

northern area of the Chiapas Highlands from 1962 to 1983. I did my work in Yajalon, Tila, Tumbala, Salto de Agua, and a bit in Sabanilla: five municipalities, one of them Tzeltal and four Chol. I spent 15 of those years, up to 1983, in the Tila parish working with my Chol brothers. I performed my work in full support of the pastoral line that we and Don Samuel were pursuing in the diocese. The reason for my leaving the diocese and the parish was totally and exclusively personal. I had fathered a child and gotten married; I currently live in the state of Morelos.

As for the colleagues of mine whose names are mentioned, I would dare say that Don Samuel's pastoral line was not the reason for their departure.

Jose Reyes Rangel (may God keep him in his Kingdom) saw his addiction to alcohol worsen and had to leave. Aurelio Zapata, who like me is from Chapa de Corzo, devoted himself generously to the peasants of Zocoltenango and suffered reprisals from the cattlemen: he was kidnapped and tortured for several days. He has recovered slowly and incompletely; he is unable to work. Pedro Ramuco was of great help to Don Samuel as vicar general of the diocese. He left because of a severe nervous breakdown caused by death threats owing to his pastoral work with the peasants.

As for the three other priests that Otilio mentions, Jose Conrado Ruiz was already elderly and fell ill; Juan Inocencio Galvan was or is a traditionalist, a follower of Monsignor Le Febre; and Antonio Patino was there before Don Samuel.

Elias Martinez, Bulmaro Gordillo, and Cecilio Baraibar left for personal reasons. Cecilio got married. Their work was in the seminary.

Otilio Lopez himself was not the vicar of Ocosingo; he worked in the Comitan area. He did not grow in his priesthood and left it. I know from a recent report that he belongs to PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] and works in the Chiapas CNC. Congratulations.

It is very easy to say that Don Samuel, as a punishment, is denying the sacraments to those who do not think like him. Couldn't the same thing be said here in Morelos? Because those who want baptism, confirmation, matrimony, first communion, and the coming-out celebration at age 15 have to attend a series of talks on the sacraments by the catechizers. Otherwise, they are not accepted. We should keep in mind that the bishop of this diocese is Monsignor Luis Reynoso, who is not like Don Samuel and presumably opposes his pastoral activity.

I must emphasize that Don Samuel's pastoral activity can be none other than the gospel of Jesus, who was born and lived among, supported, helped, and opted for the poor right up to Calvary.

I congratulate Don Samuel, of whom I think highly and with whom I was very pleased to work, and my colleagues in the diocese, many of whom I no longer know, for their resolute devotion to our Indian brothers. I would have liked to be with them during the events in early 1994.

Yours truly, Oscar Macias

Ruiz Pastoral Letter

94CA0097I Mexico City DOCUMENTACION E INFORMACION CATOLICA in Spanish 26 Aug 93 pp 678-695

[Text of pastoral letter "In this time of Grace, on the Occasion of the Greeting of His Holiness John Paul II to the Indians of the Continent," by Msgr. Samuel Ruiz Garcia, bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, 6 August 1993. In a Christmas message (the text of which was published in Mexico City DOCUMENTACION E INFORMACION CATOLICA of 13 Dec 93), Bishop Ruiz said of his August letter that it was apparently "the last straw, the act that unleashed the pent-up rage of those in power who live from exploitation of the lowly."]

[Text]

1. Greeting

In this hour of grace for the Church of Latin America, as the Good News calls us together once more in the sign of unity, and as the Holy Father returns to Mexican soil, the land of a markedly prophetic mission, what better occasion to express in unison with the universal Church the hopes, yearnings, and sufferings of our Indian peoples. The Roman Pontiff John Paul II wishes to keep his promise and make his voice of comfort and enlightenment heard to Indian representatives from all over the continent as part of the international year of indigenous peoples. Our diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, which is markedly Indian, wants to make its voice heard as well.

This new experience of Church unity and universality once again presents Jesus to us as the Good News that greets all those whose poverty places them at the fringes of society. Heralding this News at the start of his ministry, Jesus proclaims that he has been sent to proclaim the Good News to the poor and to all the victims of rejection and scorn (Luke 4:18). Aware of their needs, Jesus tells them: "Blessed are the poor...." (Luke 6:20). "So then, the needy and the sinners can feel loved by God and the object of his immense tenderness" (Document of Santo Domingo No. 4).

With this outlook of understanding and faithful to the Gospel and to the cause of the Kingdom, we wish to express the joys and sorrows of our local Church's journey, as well as the bountiful harvest of the seeds of actions and commitments that we have pursued out of loyalty to Jesus and the Church. We would feel selfish if at this moment we failed to share what God has brought to fruition in our midst, to console and edify the Church community to which we are so beholden.

2. The Need and Demands of a Word From the Faith

If we know that God speaks to us through the outcries and even through the painful silence of those who do not yet have a voice and who at times live in despair, we must be able to discern the seven "signs of the times" and diligently respond to the clamor of the poor, the oppressed, the

underprivileged, the tortured, and all those who suffer persecution owing to their race, religion, or denunciation of injustice.

"The joys and hopes, the sadness and anguish of men in our times, especially the poor and the suffering, are the joys and hopes, the sadness and anguish of the disciples of Christ. There is nothing truly human that does not awaken an echo in his Heart" (Gaudium et Spes 1).

The Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, in keeping with the statements of Vatican II, feels a solidarity with the history of our Indian brethren. Heir to the prophetic vocation of Fray Bartolome de las Casas, it walks among and with the poor, gaining an awareness of the suffering of the majority of the population: high rates of poverty, disease, illiteracy, lack of communications, deep-seated racial ostracism and discrimination...Let us hear their burning word....

3. The Word of Our People

"We are in a very difficult situation and time, in a political, economic, social, and ideological sense alike. We must talk about the current economic system because our way of life and production are oppressing us. We can see that in these new times those who accumulate wealth need two main things to keep going and make profits: the privatizations and the Free Trade Agreement. Capitalism needs these two things to continue benefiting the strong, the powerful, both here and abroad. The advances of technology push them in this direction for their own benefit. This new approach to work abandons thousands of peasants and workers to their fate.

"Given unemployment and the shortage of land, the government is pursuing political control because the poverty that the depredations of this social system creates is a threat to its policies. Thus, laws have to be amended and new crimes invented. This approach violates human rights. We can thus see that the system under which we live inherently violates human rights.

"So then, we are facing very serious and distressing problems...But when we tell each other of our suffering and our shame, then we hear the Word of God and feel that the suffering and afflictions of Christ are alive in us and that his Way of the Cross is being lived today in our municipalities. It would seem as though we are never going to see the end of this Calvary or that our problems are never going to end....

"It seems that we are not going to have a resurrection...But whereas Jesus spent three days in the ground, we do not know how long our problems are going to be with us...But we are certain that we are going to be resurrected."

3.1 Economics

People are increasingly feeling the weight of high prices, unemployment, injustice, and mounting poverty. The People are dissatisfied. There is malnutrition and poverty-caused disease.

We have no land on which to work and grow our food. We have to rent land, which takes away our profits. Our requests for land go unanswered, and the land is too expensive to buy. Meanwhile, some have a great deal of land and do not work it or use it to raise livestock, which requires large areas. When we seek to register a little plot, they charge us heavily, and if we get behind in our payments, they threaten to take our land. Oil wells are also being drilled; they belong to the government but adversely affect us because they take land from us.

The prices for what we sell are low, and we peasants need to transport our products ourselves, because the greedy profiteers and middlemen are using marketing schemes to rob us in selling them.

Wages are very low; families cannot live on them. Many workers and peasants who request higher wages through the regular established channels see that the decision almost always goes in the companies' favor. We thus have no one to assert our rights. The government boards help those who have money at the expense of the workers.

The government forces us to produce what suits it and would have us believe that "the efforts of all will resolve the crisis." The taxes on electricity and land are very high and rise every year. Bank loans are unaffordable, and we sink into debt, while private loans carry very high interest rates. The system is stripping the region of its natural resources, without development for all.

The forestry law is causing problems; people are being jailed under it. We are suffering greatly in the communities. We must file a request to cut down a tree. We have to pay to cut it down. If we do not pay, we have to perform 10 days' service in the tree nurseries.

The powerful, the well-off, and the tavern keepers are bleeding us dry.

3.2 Politics

The authorities almost do not allow us to voice our opinions. We are being humiliated and deceived.

In elections we are forced to vote for the ruling party: PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party]. When we elect our own authorities, the people on top do not like them and put in their own. They should put one of our own in the municipal government to help us. It would be a good idea to train our own people to hold posts in the municipal government and help us resolve our complaints.

The authorities do not like to see us organizing and want to get rid of the people who head up a group.

There is repression in the countryside and the city. They repress us by taking our lands. They sic the police and the army on us and investigate us.

There is widespread corruption among the authorities. The courts are there to serve money and the dominant political ideology.

3.3 Society

Besides widespread illiteracy, the school system is very deficient because teachers are irresponsible, impose new demands on us (holidays, godparents, uniforms), destroy our culture, conduct registrations at the wrong time and with many requirements, thus costing us time and money. Oversight by the educational authorities is lacking. But it seems that this is part of the system, because keeping people ignorant suits the government.

We do not have electricity, drinking water, or sewers in the countryside. Such health-care services as there are impose programs to introduce artificial birth control or to promote the abortion law.

Alcoholism is deeply rooted in our communities. It is a sign of our frustration and causes divisions, family breakups, confrontations, and death.

Many brothers and sisters who have not signed up at the registry office are forced to do so. They come from very far away to register but are asked to meet many requirements and thus waste much time and money.

The government demands that a community defray 70 percent of the cost of building a highway to it, besides furnishing good meals for the workers.

Women are very underprivileged and suffer greatly because they are the main victims of alcoholism, our worst enemy, which we have not been able to uproot.

3.4 Ideology

There is complacency owing to the influence of others whose ideas dominate us. Those who leave to look for work because the land does not suffice return with new ideas and are no longer in tune with the community.

The government sets up cooperatives that do not educate. The radio lies instead of informing properly. They advertise items that we cannot afford and do not need, while making us believe that we can afford them and that their use or consumption will make us happy (Assembly of the Believer People, May 1993).

This is what a great many of our people think.

4. The Explanation in the Context of Our Own History

Our people's current impoverished situation and deplorable living conditions, which are even worse in the Indian zones of our diocese, can be explained by the action of institutions that have developed over 500 years of our history.

4.1 The Conquest

For the Indian pueblos the conquest meant subjugation and exploitation by the colonizers; such subjugation and exploitation took several different forms, depending on external interests and local protests against the brutality that was inflicted on the indigenous peoples and the trampling of their dignity.

Slavery gave way to the "encomienda" [land and inhabitants granted to a conquistador], which in turn gave way to the parceling out of Indian pueblos, at the same time that the tax system was stabilizing. Amid this onslaught only a few peoples were able to keep possession of their lands under normal conditions, even in the areas of sanctuary.

4.2 Independent Mexico

The ups and downs of National Independence and, later, the first modernization with the reform and industrialization promoted by Porfirio Diaz led to the growth and development of the Mexican hacienda, with its patterns of forced labor differing from region to region.

With the haciendas came the predominance of the system of "permanently resident rural estate peons," uncultivated lands, and servants. These trends led to a greater concentration of land in private hands and to a decline in the lands owned and controlled by the Indian pueblos. These were the days of the sinister stories about the operations to extract chicle and fancy woods from the tropical jungle or the factories that produced sugar and spirits in more humid regions.

4.3 The Mexican Revolution and the Agrarian Reform

The faction that triumphed in the Mexican Revolution sought to change the institutions of land tenure with its agrarian reform proposal aimed at quieting the demands and rebellions of the peasants. This was the reason for the various regulations governing small-scale property, whereby communal assets were restored and deeded and large haciendas were redistributed in the form of the ejidos and the new ejido population centers. The uneven pace and scope of these measures are well documented, aside from their complex, stormy history.

The agrarian reform had a shining moment in Chiapas under Lazaro Cardenas, when the first ejidos were established and deeds were issued for the first communal assets. During subsequent periods this process slowed and failed to keep pace with the rest of the country. We saw peonage systems in Indian regions of Chiapas as late as the 1980's. In contrast, products such as coffee, cacao, tobacco, and bananas were being exported from modern plantations, and areas of forest and jungle were being opened up and cleared for extensive ranching and grazing.

4.4 The Neoliberal Agenda of Modernization

We call it this because starting with the years of so-called "stabilizing development" in our country (the 1950's) and more emphatically since the 1970's, Chiapas began to be viewed as a strategic region in economic and national security terms. Chiapas is a border state near Central America possessed of significant resources that could bring in foreign exchange: hydroelectric power, oil deposits, and the tourism appeal of natural beauty, shot through with Mayan history.

The crisis of the industrialized countries and the fall in oil prices in the first half of the 1980's made the burden of the foreign debt intolerable for the economic system. The State then took its first neoliberal macroeconomic austerity measures, which carried a high price for the most vulnerable

strata and classes. The government of President Salinas intensified and honed these measures to modernize and reform the structure of the economy and the State, retaining control of the more strictly political concessions and seeking a new way to incorporate the Mexican economy into the international system, relying on the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada as the touchstone of this effort. It managed the social problems arising from the expanding areas of poverty and extreme poverty by making discretionary use of its contingency funds (the result of a leaner public sector) through PRONASOL [National Solidarity Program], the operative arm of so-called "Social Liberalism."

From this perspective, we are now living in what we could call "the second modernization of the countryside in Chiapas." It is taking place amid a protracted drop in world coffee prices, precisely when agrarian conflicts are intensifying and spreading, in accordance with the criteria of previous agrarian legislation (Chiapas accounts for 27 percent of the nation's backward agrarian sector). The spearhead of this agrarian modernization movement is the reforms of Article 27 of the constitution and the new agrarian law. The goal is typically "modern": to remove obstacles so that land can be turned into merchandise and, thus, private investors can buy it up or form joint investment ventures.

The consequences that are actually in the offing are the destruction of the land's meaning to the community, the concentration of ownership, and migration from the countryside to the cities, particularly as a result of the program to certify ejido rights (ProCeDe), a legal requirement for the purchase and sale of ejido lands.

5. The Burden of Recent Decades: Salient Problems

5.1 High Degree of Unrest

Given this wide-ranging panorama of asymmetry and inequality, it is no surprise that recent decades in our diocese have been marked by an extremely high level of unrest. In the indigenous zones the most vulnerable groups in this structural framework have been establishing their own organizations and methods of struggle to demand their rights to land and better living conditions. It has not been an easy road; rather, it has been marked by violent responses from those who benefit from the status quo. Nonetheless, the difficulties themselves have forced the Indian pueblos to mobilize against hunger, exploitation, and repression in various ways: marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, hunger strikes, etc.

5.2 Guatemalan Refugees

Moreover, the sociopolitical conflicts in Guatemala and the response of the Guatemalan State and military have also forced the peoples and communities ravaged by the military's "scorched earth" policy to flee into our country and seek refuge in Mexican communities along the border, which have responded with solidarity and like good Christians, along with other national and international organizations. Today, more than a decade has passed, and there are hopeful signs that they will be able to return. For example, in early January we and the Believer People of the Diocese watched as some 2,500 of our Guatemalan refugee brothers made an organized return to their country.

5.3 The Expulsions

Since the 1970's we have also had to confront the painful problem of Indians who have been expelled as individuals and in groups from their municipalities and communities. Both our Evangelical and Catholic brothers have been victims. This development has forced us to spotlight freedom of religion and to expose the political and economic interests of the cacique government structures, which are given to intolerance and deals with the State. This situation has also required an ecumenical dialogue at various levels and has prompted our offer of humanitarian aid and counsel in defense of the human rights of the affected groups, families, and individuals.

What we find truly extraordinary is the testimony of many families that have been expelled, Catholic and Evangelical alike, who have preferred to be stripped of their homes, lands, and domestic animals rather than renounce their faith. Those who have signed some document asserting that they have changed religions to avoid being expelled can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Regardless of their religious differences, the people who have been expelled have organized movements to defend their rights and have achieved significant results.

5.4 Discrimination and Inequality

Although the State that emerged from the Mexican Revolution has tended to present itself as the guarantor of a "nationalist" identity into which an indigenous component has been incorporated, racism and discrimination are still rampant in these regions. Although there have been official and semiofficial attempts to reduce all forms of poverty, when we examine their results, we see that the structures of inequality of the socioeconomic system itself have outweighed them. Discrimination can be seen in all forms of poverty and in the predominance of political control to counter organized expressions of protest or dissent that pose just demands.

But this blight is most obvious in the administration of justice and respect for human rights. Our diocese's records in recent years contain a frightening number of reports of trumped up charges, unlawful arrests, torture, impunity, unjust imprisonments, mistreatment in prison, evictions, etc.

Therefore, it is not subjective to argue that all human and social relationships in Chiapas are shot through with inequality and tinged with oppression and domination, which become part of the collective consciousness. More than elsewhere in the country, the identity of men and women from Chiapas reflects this situation in many ways. The clearest differences can be seen in the case of the Indians, not only because of their race but also their economic and social status. Stripped of their lands, the Indians are strangers in their own land. This state of affairs is repeated

among the natives who live on the fringes of national society and whose lands are being settled, with all of the consequences thereof: expropriation of their lands, the pillaging of their natural habitats, and the loss of their culture. In the cities the differences are just as great, albeit less apparent. The way people deal with each other makes these inequalities clear, and they become heightened in times of social conflict. These differences have become internalized and are reflected in the role that each is called upon to play in society. The poor in Chiapas are the Indians, the peasants, the workers, the sick, the mestizos, the children, the women, those who do not have influential friends, the expelled, the jobless, and the low-income earners.

5.5 The 1994 Political Transition

In recent weeks our country has been engulfed in a series of very worrisome violent events. These developments have revealed that drug trafficking is linked to police, judicial, and political institutions. Regrettably, the official version of the death of our brother, Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo, has succeeded only in underscoring the people's widespread mistrust of government institutions. In the midst of the 1994 political transition, this has been compounded by the scant credibility of electoral processes and mechanisms, which are tainted by the control that the State and its party have over them. In this specific regard, many have pointed out that as long as this situation persists, the democratization of our political system will remain an unfulfilled wish. There are serious fears that if this barrier remains, it will lead to confrontations and strains among political players outside the institutional rules and accords. The present moment is marked both by signs of a relative opening and by the resurgence of political demands that have long gone unmet.

5.6 Injustices and the Response of the Diocese

As part of our Christian commitment to the Indians and peasants of the southern Pacific region, we have been pointing out the grave situation and the subhuman conditions in which our brothers are living. This situation has been worsening because our system has created new forms of political exploitation and legal injustice that legitimize oppression and repression. Cultures are under ideological assault and being stripped of their fundamental values. The list of injustices done to the indigenous people in our diocese over the past 500 years is a very long one.

In light of the challenges posed by modern life and the harshness of neoliberalism, both they and we alongside them have seen that poverty is in and of itself an evil that is totally contrary to God's will.

The Church has been able to fulfill its prophetic mission at various times through prominent figures and works. It cannot be denied, however, that at other times it has grown worldly, whether by ideologically legitimizing the organs of colonial government or the independent State or by enjoying privileges when it used the tools of the prevailing systems to gain property and power.

This local Church, which is marked mainly by Fray Bartolome de las Casas's evangelical loyalty, has chosen in recent decades to take its place on the fringes of society alongside the very poor.

In other words, the former Diocese of Chiapas, whose first bishop was Fray Bartolome de las Casas, a steadfast defender of the Indians and implacable critic of the colonial system, has been characterized by its pastoral line because the dreadful conditions that he fought against are still present. Particularly after the Second Vatican Council, the presence of pastoral agents from the diocese (priests, brothers, and committed laymen) in a situation of unrest set us on a long path that has also meant a long process of conversion. The indigenous community, which makes up the majority of the population and is the most disadvantaged segment of society, required that we make our presence felt urgently (if we wanted to remain faithful to the Gospel). This is why our diocese bears the characteristics inherent to pastoral action among the Indians. By such pastoral action we do not mean just concern for the natives; rather, it is an embodiment of our presence in their world, which is full of both shortcomings and grand values. We see it as an experience that guides our reflections about our faith, our pastoral activities, and our aspiration as a Church to move towards the emergence of an Autochthonous Church that will be able to tell of its salvific history, express itself in their culture, enrich itself with their values, embrace their sufferings, struggles, and aspirations, and through the strength of the Gospel transform and liberate their culture. As one Indian man said years ago to the apostolic delegate at the time: "Unless the Church becomes Tzeltal with the Tzeltal Indians, Chol with the Chol Indians, and Tojolabal with the Tojolabal Indians...I do not see how it can call itself the Catholic Church." It would actually be an upstart Church belonging to a ruling social class, alien to the Indians. The religious schizophrenia that Indians have experienced since the war of conquest will not disappear until they are acculturated in the Gospel in a way that bears fruit in their own ministers, in a faith that is reflected in their own cultural ways, and in the celebration of the Sacraments with their own ethnic expressions (Ad Gentes 6).

With this pastoral option our "...Church through its children joins with men of any status, but especially the poor and the afflicted, and devotes itself joyfully to them. It shares in their joys and sorrows, comes to know the aspirations and enigmas of life, and suffers with them in their death throes" (Ad Gentes 12. Cf: Ad Gentes 11 2).

This option has brought harassment and attacks, both by the State and by various privileged groups or sectors, in the economic and sociocultural spheres. We have thus had to endure slanderous propaganda and lies over the official and semiofficial mass media, intimidation, the jailing of pastoral agents, the murder of catechizers, and even inter-Church denunciations, with guileless people manipulated and deceived.

In short, the so-called discovery of America conditioned the life and integration of the New Continent and changed the history of our peoples; it also changed the life of the peoples

who looked at us with eyes of destructive, dominating greed and the life of those who looked upon us with apostolic zeal to convey to us their experience of faith and set us on a new path.

The full benefits of the call to Christ's faith to form a Church, which summons peoples like a light raised on high, are better understood after 500 years and ought to be duly appreciated. Therefore, our Roman Pontiff, Pope John Paul II, put forth the idea of nine years of renewed evangelization to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the meeting of the two worlds, inasmuch as the birth of what we today call Latin America was closely linked to the proclamation of the Gospel's message in our lands. And although it is true that the evangelization was at times also used as a tool for subjecting peoples to an unjust colonization and its resulting depredations, "it must also be recognized that...it has been much more powerful than the shadows that regrettably accompanied it down through history."

6. The Diocesan Pastoral Process (1960-1993)

6.1.1 Interpreters and Confidants of the People

As interpreters and confidants of the people, we realize how difficult it is to open the door to hope when the conditions under which most people live are so distressing and the structures of domination are so persistent that those who devote their lives to change see that all of creation is misused by the evil of the wicked. Those who seek the paths of justice become so upset and frustrated at times that they do not know what to do and not even what to ask for. But we know that the Spirit wails within us with indescribable sobs that the Father can, however, understand, as the Spirit intercedes with Him on our behalf (Romans 8:18-27).

It is precisely now that words of encouragement are most needed, words that are both specific and that explain why Christians have hope. Today we wish to support all that we have done and said on its sole, true foundation: the Resurrection. The process of the diocesan Church that began 33 years ago has the Lord's Resurrection as its source, because if Christ did not rise again, our pastoral work and your faith are in vain. The message of the Resurrection is, in fact, the core that has given us hope through the various stages, because the Resurrection is the central mystery of the faith, and the faith has given us the inspiration for everything that we have done.

6.1.2 Evangelizing

"To evangelize is to do what Jesus Christ did when in the synagogue he showed that he had come to 'evangelize' the poor (Luke 4:18-19). Being rich, he became poor to enrich us with his poverty (2 Corinthians 8,9). He challenges us to bear genuine witness to evangelical poverty in our lifestyle and Church structures, as He did. This is the foundation of our commitment to an evangelical and preferential option for the poor, an option that is steadfast and irrevocable but neither exclusive nor exclusionary, as solemnly affirmed at the Medellin and Puebla conferences" (Santo Domingo No. 178, 1-3).

6.1.3 The Suffering of Our People Is the Starting Point

The suffering of our people is the starting point of a lengthy journey, of a transforming process of conversion, of a pressing appeal for us to serve as salvific mediators for the indigenous world (the poor among the poor), an appeal that awaits an evangelical reply without delay.

6.2 Several Stages in What We Call the Diocesan Process Can Be Distinguished

6.2.1 The Stage of Pastoral Renewal

The stage of pastoral renewal began after the Second Vatican Council and was supported by the joint pastoral of the UMAE (Union of Mutual Episcopal Aid), in which 25 dioceses took part. This stage sought to develop a Joint Pastoral through planning with the aid of Religious Sociology and with the encouragement of the Movement for a Better World. Several ecclesiastical organizations in Mexico became enthusiastic about the idea and the earnestness with which the movement was set in motion, in light of the backing that Padre Lombardo, S.J. and the father of Religious Sociology himself, Canon Boulard, gave to this movement. Many community leaders who were called upon at the time remain active to this day.

Work in teams, divided up by homogeneous zones, was organized in the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas. This teamwork continues today, with some modifications. Taking part with us in this undertaking in the southern Pacific coast region were Guatemalan bishops from neighboring dioceses, who were united in their desire to move forward together in the indigenous pastoral. The disastrous Guatemalan earthquake interrupted the meetings that we had been holding with them.

The process that UMAE had set in motion was taken up by the Bishops Conference itself when it asked the services team which had been set up to advise the Mexican Episcopate.

6.2.2 The Stage of Pastoral Reaffirmation

The stage of reaffirming the value of indigenous cultures, in order to develop a pastoral geared to the various situations of these ethnic groups, began after the Gatherings of Indigenous Missions in Mexico and the Pastoral Gathering of Missions in Melgar, Colombia, which was organized by the Missions Department of CELAM [Latin American Bishops Conference] in preparation for the Medellin meeting. The shared approaches and experiences that furthered an understanding of missionary work date from my term as president of the CELAM Missions Department and of the Episcopal Commission for Indians in Mexico. We thus moved gradually from the "pro-Indian pastoral" (run by agents alien to the Indian communities) to an indigenous pastoral (run by people in charge of the communities themselves).

6.2.3 The Stage of Grasping the Sociopolitical Dimension

This stage was marked by the political liberalization of the country, when political movements could be acknowledged

as partisan movements that were able to run in elections. We bishops of the southern Pacific coast region (Province of Antequera or Oaxaca) issued a joint Pastoral Document to guide the faithful in the region. Although it was not our intention, the document had a major domestic and even international impact.

Political parties that had theretofore not been registered or officially recognized went into every corner of the republic to sign up the affiliates they needed to register. Our region saw a heavy influx of political movements and parties, which made their presence effectively felt despite linguistic, ethnic, and geographic barriers. The aforementioned Pastoral Letter had been both timely and prophetic, and besides being very useful, it still offers guidance in most respects.

This stage included our diocese's inescapable commitment to join in the Indians' struggles to recover their lands and in the criticism of the euphoria surrounding the "oil miracle" that brutalized Indians, created tension and conflict, prompted a campaign to discredit us, and brought repression of Indian leaders and the pastoral agents who stood by them in their efforts and struggles to defend their cultural identity, their patrimony, and their survival.

6.2.4 The Stage of the Economic and Social Processes of Neoliberal Modernity

Neoliberal Modernity, with its economic and social processes, does not take the diversity of peoples into account. It seems that modernity would like to eliminate them, as if they were a hindrance rather than a human resource. One of the urgent responsibilities of the new evangelization is to establish the autochthonous Church, which has emerged from the historic trends in society, culture, religion, and the faith.

Our great motivation in this process is the appeal for love and service that Christ makes to us from the suffering people with whom he identifies. We acknowledge that our path is in our faith, in the heart of our Church, the Church that notwithstanding its tensions and limitations and even the human failings of many of its members, is able to respond to the Spirit that guides it through historic crossroads such as the Vatican Council, Medellin, Puebla, and Santo Domingo. At no point have we lapsed into a spiritualist reductionism (which shuns history) or a sociological reductionism that fails to affirm our transcendence.

6.3 Three Elements That Have Accompanied Us on Our Journey

In the beginning we saw these three aspects as parallel. Over time, however, our pastoral activities brought them together, until we viewed them as a basic unit that has accompanied us on our diocesan journey.

6.3.1 Incarnation

Our Church can be truly Catholic only to the extent that it becomes "whole for all" and is able to proclaim salvation from the very essence of mankind in its specific forms, our cultures. It must invigorate, purify, and enlighten them, placing the gifts that God has given humanity in the context of the faith with an eye towards the building of the Kingdom that will become part of history and seek eagerly to undertake the divine project, which has been planted in the hearts of men and which will reach its fullness in the Second Coming.

6.3.2 Liberation

We have discovered that redemption through Christ is a comprehensive redemption accomplished inchoately in history or with the involvement of mankind. This discovery was not the result of abstract reflection; it was the result of living together with our people and seeing their poverty, their suffering, and the injustice of which they are victims. We hear the urgent appeal for us to become a credible Church that proclaims the Good News to the poor.

6.3.3 Service to the World

We know that the Church is not an end in itself, nor is it built for itself. We know that it has been sent into the world as its servant and as a humble but necessary leavening for the construction of the Kingdom of God, which is justice, love, and peace. We also know that the Kingdom begins here, although its consummation is not of this world. This spurs us on, in the here and now, to perform our evangelical task of learning how to talk with all those of good will, to shed evangelical light on the times, and to walk with all our brothers.

6.4 The Most Important Moments of the Diocesan Process

6.4.1 The Indian Congress

In 1974 the diocese was invited to take part in an Indian Congress from 14 to 16 October in the city of San Cristobal de las Casas to honor the feast of Fray Bartolome de las Casas, the "defender of the Indians." In accepting, the diocese was trying merely to enable the Indians to make their voice heard in public after so many years of silence. The Indians astutely seized the opportunity and accepted the challenge of taking responsibility for the Congress and putting the seal of their own personality on it. A thousand communities representing 400,000 persons took part for one year, during which time they gathered together the complaints and problems of the four linguistic zones (Chol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and Tojolabal) in the areas of land, trade, education, and health care.

Representatives who were "men of their word" were elected at these assemblies, that is to say, individuals who are consistent in "what they do and say" and who would put their proposals before their Indian brothers in attendance.

During the three-day Congress they described in detail the desperate conditions in which they lived, giving specific examples of their plight: abuse in stores, exploitation on the job, eviction from their lands, destruction of their culture, oppression, murders that go unpunished, etc. Their denunciations were analytical, with painful, undeniable information as to dates, places, persons, and events. They offered suggestions as to how justice could be served and put forth

an organized plan of action. They asked the Church (which they know is not a political party or a political alternative but does have social power) to lend them its support and its prophetic voice, as the Lord, incarnate in Yahweh's poor, asks of it.

When we as pastoral agents of the diocese heard and saw what the Indians were saying about their own situation, we realized very clearly that we had drafted our Pastoral Plan without taking into account the aspirations, needs, and hopes of their communities. In answer to their appeal, we drew up a plan that sought to respond in some way, based on the faith, to the needs they described.

6.4.2 Preferential Option for the Poor

The panorama of impoverished, disadvantaged conditions that we see in Latin America is strongly prevalent in our diocese. With a great sense of responsibility and fidelity to the Gospel we recall the pastoral letter of 17 October 1985, which on behalf of the Christians in the diocese denounced the injustices that the people are constantly suffering.

It is with deep sorrow and concern that we have seen in Chiapas the increasing number of attempted murders, the abuse of the most basic human rights, and the crackdown on grass-roots movements. As a diocesan Church, we strive to be faithful to our vocation to build the Kingdom of God by advancing evangelical values to humanize the earth and by serving primarily the poor. We cannot remain uninvolved in what is happening in our midst. Events cause us to exclaim: "Yahweh has seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt and has heard the appeal to be free of their slave drivers. I am well aware of their sufferings" (Exodus 3:7).

Aware of the painful conditions facing our brothers, the poorest of the poor, we chose to accompany them, like the good Samaritan, in their quest for a new society based on justice and brotherhood.

The evangelizing task of Jesus himself is marked by a commitment to the poor. He undertook his messianic mission as "the servant of Yahweh" (Isaiah 41:9; 42; 49:3-50:3). He is the one who is to come; there is no need to wait for another. For the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor (Matthew 11:2-7; Luke 4:16-22).

We will be able to understand the Beatitudes of Christ only if we avoid placing our heart in riches and only if we are prepared to fraternally share economic, social, and cultural goods with those who lack them (Luke 6:20-26). Men are blessed when, moved by the Spirit of God, they make common cause with the poor (Matthew 5:11-19).

In the beginning, our pastoral plans focused mainly on the neediest. But as we lived together with "Yahweh's poor" and discovered their great suffering, we were forced by circumstances to speak out against the way in which they were being plundered. Therefore, in light of evangelical reflection, we had to make a more clear-cut option for the poor. This was no decree, no mere theological rambling; it was a simple reading of our intentions and the trend of our pastoral activities in the face of painful realities. It was an urgent evangelical decision. We also knew that we were beginning to experience the conflict of charity: proclaiming from amid the poor a message of conversion to the oppressor and proclaiming to the oppressed, with whom Christ identifies, a hope-giving Gospel (Santo Domingo 279, 178-179). In light of this diocesan option, we revised the training of future priests, our actions, and our attitudes, in a word, our entire approach.

The structure of our diocese has undergone changes during these years, not only to meet the demands of the Council but also as a result of contact with the communities and a consideration of their permanently conflict-ridden situations, as well as to respond to unexpected developments that demanded rapid analysis.

The theological-pastoral reflection that accompanied this evolution was also marked by historical junctures that were favorable to our diocese. Having attended all sessions of the Council, I was also at the Melgar missionary meeting in preparation for the episcopal gathering in Medellin, at which I also presented a paper: "Evangelization in Latin America." When I was asked to serve as chairman of the CELAM Missions Department and, later, as chairman of the Bishops Commission for Indians of the Mexican Bishops Conference, I gained opportunities to enrich the diocese's journey with the post-Council Latin American theological reflection on missionary work that was developing at the time.

6.4.3 The Way of Evangelization and Catechesis

6.4.3.1 The First Stage, 1952

During the first stage, which began under my predecessor, His Excellency Bishop Dr. Lucio Torreblanca, Indian men and women stepped forward, motivated by the Spirit of the Lord, and gathered their brothers together. They taught hymns and explained certain catechistic texts with questions and answers. Most important was the testimony of their lives, as manifested in their zeal and the glow of their words. They did not have academic training; they did not have a legal mandate. They had an evangelical mandate to share the joy of having discovered a new life (Matthew 13:44-46).

In 1961, the apostolic delegate, Msgr. Luigi Raimondi, suggested that the Chiapas diocese establish two schools of catechistic training for Indians in an effort to implement the resolutions of the Indian Missionary Congress. During this period 700 catechizers from various Indian regions were trained. The methods were very dynamic, but Western in nature and organized from the top down. There was, however, this key element: a devotion to service in proclaiming the Good News to all, whatever the sacrifice.

6.4.3.2 The Second Stage, Starting in 1968

The second stage began in 1968. In assessing the catechizing efforts, the catechizers clearly stated: "The Church and the Word of God have told us about things to save our souls, but we do not know how to save our bodies. While we work for the salvation of our souls and the souls of others,

we suffer hunger, disease, poverty, and death." These words spoke to us and helped us to discover that the Gospel is not just a series of dogmas but also a liberating proclamation and a new life. The Council and later Medellin spoke to us of a liberating proclamation that entails learning humbly how the Spirit of God lives and acts in the historic-salvific values and events of a given culture.

We thus intensified our reflection on and practice of a catechesis that we called the catechesis of incarnation, which sought to have the Word of God assume the flesh of a culture and invigorate the individual and community life of our brothers amid historical events. The entire life of the community, its social, economic, political, and cultural reality, was revealed to us as a theological place that, as the bishops emphasized at the October 1974 synod, bespoke the substance of the proclamation that must be made through its various components (the needs of the listeners, their desires, and their way of speaking, thinking, judging, and interacting with their fellow man).

The catechizers became spokesmen of the community's thinking, not just teachers who conveyed prefabricated thinking. The Word of God became reflected within the communities on the basis of experiences and situations, and the catechizers became "the gatherers of the harvest of community thought." As they reflected on very painful situations they had experienced, men, women, and children began speaking out, in keeping with the Indians' style, until they developed the Resolution, which contained their vision of the faith, their theological vision of reality. These resolutions were called "catechistic readings," and although they were not going to be taught to the community, they represented the outgrowth of their Christian reflection on their lives and problems. When they reflected on brotherly charity, they said: "Charity is not talked about, or defined, or written about; charity is lived." Their reflection consisted of a commitment to organize the community and live that commitment in man's three dimensions: How will we live our charity in politics? What does loving our fellow man mean in the economic sphere? What does it mean to love one's brother from the standpoint of culture?

Without the self-sacrificing devotion of our servants and catechizers, evangelization would have made scant progress in a diocese as large, as isolated (owing to the lack of roads), and as complex (given its diverse ethnic, political, and economic makeup) as ours. They bring the communities together, at least once a week, and nourish the communities' faith with their words, their example, and their actions.

6.4.4 The Oneness and Service of Authority

The episcopal mission in the Church of God involves the tasks of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the People of God and seeks to consolidate the Church of the Lord so that it, as the light of nations, can proclaim, promote, and contribute with all men of "good will" to the construction of the Kingdom of God, which is shaped in time and consummated in eternity.

The efforts to fulfill this threefold episcopal mission throughout our diocese amid the complexity of its ethnic groups and historical situations do not end with the direct activities of the bishop himself. Pastoral agents, committed lay persons, catechizers, and countless servants acting jointly with him are active throughout the diocese. The diocese has 7,822 catechizers and 422 deacon candidates (called pre-deacons) in 2,608 communities. Along with the catechizers, the Christian communities have developed other ministries that help build the People of God. Several thousand people conduct these ministries on a permanent basis in our diocese, their only remuneration being the strength that the Lord gives their hearts.

By the same token, one of the most important efforts that the bishop of this diocese has undertaken has been to make way for joint responsibility and shared decision-making in the great task of proclaiming the Gospel to the poor. The Diocesan Assemblies are an example of this. Each of them is a salvific moment in which our diocesan life is invigorated, guided, and begun anew in light of the events that reflect a love of God, as embodied in history and discovered through the written Word.

Through an ongoing conversion that means accepting the presence of the Spirit in the community in light of the faith, we become convinced that we must respect individuals and communities (while still addressing them critically) so that they can compare their behavior with the Word of God and realize that they themselves must forge their own history. This is all the more necessary because the people (especially the indigenous people) have had their voice in society, and even in the Church itself, taken away from them. We have taken the steps that we have because the people must become aware of their dignity as children of God who have been redeemed through the blood of Christ. We have also taken them because we need organizations to demand what in justice is due them. In the final accounting, we have taken them because the dispossessed, spurred by their Christian faith, must proceed towards the construction of the Kingdom in justice, as the privileged audience of the Gospel.

The Spirit of the Lord has brought forth in these communities values the seeds of which were planted throughout their history. The Church Fathers called them "Seeds of the Word." This lends acculturation in the Gospel a distinguishing feature. The community structure and the lifestyle of solidarity and service in Mayan Indian cultures are strikingly conducive to an acceptance of the Good News in the freshness and novelty that characterize the ministries.

The indigenous culture, along with an evangelization strongly marked by Christian commitment, are the new wine that offers many opportunities for work and shared responsibility in service to the community. Various ministries are thus emerging in the community, as former ministries of their own culture are renewed and invigorated. The most common terms referring to them are: "workers" and "servants," which indicate that work is truly being done for the community. After many years of work amid suffering and hope we have in our diocese: catechizers, secretaries, leaders, stewards, chairmen, choirs, regional heads, health promoters, women's coordinators, tuhuneles

[not further identified], pre-deacons, deacons, and servants for the defense of human rights.

The communities' responsible acceptance of the Gospel fuels the hope that we can move towards an indigenous priesthood.

Since we are accompanying the people in their search for mature, aware, and responsible answers, we must ask the Lord Jesus to render our minds permanently clear so that we can discern before him the commitment that leads to the construction of the Kingdom of God in justice and truth.

6.5 Accomplishments and Work Methods

6.5.1 Accomplishments

It is difficult to recount accomplishments because several are the work of other institutions, bodies, or individuals that also have an impact on the life of the communities.

What we can describe as a diocesan accomplishment is the move that the Indian and peasant communities have been making away from having others decide for them and towards forging their own history. In other words, the Indians and peasants are gaining a growing awareness of their dignity, enhanced by the values of the Gospel. They have been taking the place that they deserve in the Church and, consequently, in history as well. Gradually they are feeling and living their own responsibility in the Church to which they belong and which belongs to them.

The communities have been gaining a critical awareness, which is a sign of a mature faith. They are discovering that united they can solve the problems besetting them. Appreciation for their own language, their legitimate customs, and their cultural identity has grown. Translators selected by the communities have translated the Sacred Scriptures into several Indian languages, with guidance from the diocese, which bears the ultimate responsibility.

They have taken joint responsibility for the cooperative and health-care movement. Enlightened by reflection on the Word of God, many communities have organized unions to improve various aspects of their lives: transportation, loans, health care, etc.

6.5.2 Work Methods

All work methods have evolved, but one of them evolved more strikingly or constantly in one of the zones and from there spread naturally to the rest. It was a catechesis that moved from indoctrination ("Nopteswanej") to community involvement ("Tijwanej"). This method involves courses either for a specific group, which then conveys them to its community, or for entire communities, which add their comments, thus enriching the courses for other communities. Depending on needs and timing, these courses address: introduction or further studies for catechizers; Sacred Scripture; support group members; deacon training; human rights; analysis of actual conditions, faith and politics, and health care. They are taught in the community, in a zone, or in a broader region.

Whether with the enlightenment of the faith or with support infrastructure, mechanisms are put in place to complement the processes, decisions, or actions, depending on our role: pilgrimages, support for a ban on alcohol, support for women's groups, and guidance and support in cases of human rights violations. On pastoral tours, during visits, and at meetings we accompany them in their expressions of joy: in celebrating the faith, at the feasts of patron saints, and at meetings with community representatives, whether for special issues or to assess, organize, or schedule gatherings. Their modest goal is economic or environmental alternatives so that they can discover their own abilities and see the results of their own actions.

6.5.3 Criteria

At the root of all our pastoral guidance lies an evangelical principle: proclaiming and living a faith that leads to abundant life (John 10:10), and illuminating the link between faith and life. Therefore, at each step of the way we must judge whether an action furthers the creation of the Kingdom of God in Justice, in Truth, in Love, in Peace.

Hence, every pastoral action is legitimate if it is liberating, if it respects the legitimate decisions of God's People, if it accompanies their journey and helps the weak, if it takes into account their culture, religiosity, and needs.

Pastoral agents decide carefully when to be present so that they do not displace people from their proper place but instead help them to mature so that they themselves can decide, question, and evaluate, thus shaping their own history. The people themselves often wisely tell us where our place is. In the final accounting, manipulation, paternalism, and supplanting run counter to the Gospel.

It is important to acknowledge and respect people's proper place in their civic and political decisions. Enlightened by the faith, Christians do well to make their own political decisions, and we as pastoral agents should neither head their organizations nor promote our own leadership. Guidance that informs, enlightens, or supports whatever just actions are undertaken is consistent with our role.

6.5.4 Mistakes

We have made many mistakes in our pastoral pilgrimage.

Our first actions, years before the Second Vatican Council, were destructive of culture. We had only our own criteria for judging customs, and our judgment was based on ethnocentrism and moralizing, which unfortunately were widespread at the time. Our shortcomings, our compassion and love for the Indians, and our presence in their midst had to suffice.

We were unable to see the mestizo domination of politics and the economy and even their manipulation of religion to facilitate their plundering of the Indians, who were kind and enthusiastically religious. Without realizing, much less analyzing it, we were on the side of those who oppressed the Indians; we felt that through them and their illusory good will we could bring about some changes.

We have not found a pedagogical method (if there is one) to touch the hearts of those who, while geographically close to the Indians and peasants, are distant from them in spirit. The many methods and activities we experimented with in various parts of the diocese have had short-lived effects. The conversion of the so-called "caxlan" or mestizo hinges in some cases on restitution, which means the departure of all of them from the community, inasmuch as they have improperly taken possession of homes and lands. We see that the hearts of more than a few mestizos are opening up, while others are hardening.

The presence of the poor and their deep grasp of the mysteries that God reveals to them more than to the learned (Luke 10:21) have caused jealousy and the feeling that they are being left out of a Church that they once knew and that they saw as a place of worship without any commitment to follow Jesus and without any concern for their brothers (Luke 16:19-31).

We have not made sufficient use of grass-roots religiosity to harness its deep, hidden sense of liberation.

The frequent personnel changes by religious congregations adversely affect the monitoring of evangelization efforts and teamwork.

The pace of events is dizzying at times, and we are often incapable of reacting to the consequences that they have for the people. The agrarian laws that were recently reformed in connection with the so-called Free Trade Agreement are having a very adverse impact on the peasant communities, but we have been unable to propose alternatives to them.

7. Our Word as a Church, Today

7.1 The Evangelizing Mission of the Church, Sacrament of the Father's Love

God wishes to restore life where death imposes its laws: "I have seen the oppression of my people and heard their cries" (Exodus 3:7). He is manifesting himself in our troubled history to reestablish his plan: to distribute the riches of creation justly (Luke 1:47-55). God reveals himself when he accompanies the people's liberation and forges an alliance with them: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:12). Thus, to be against the people and their rightful aspirations is to be against God. Jesus became poor among the poor and from their midst proclaimed and fulfilled the Father's Plan amid a troubled history of death, and he calls on us to take the path of Life, strengthened by the Truth and the Hope of the Resurrection.

Therefore, in light of this situation, the Church's evangelizing mission (the Sacrament of the Father's Love, of Jesus's Solidarity, and of the summoning of the Holy Spirit) demands that we proclaim here and now the Good News of the entire world's liberation so that all men and women will pledge to take part in God's action in the world by acknowledging Christ as the Lord of Life who acts in history.

The plan of Salvation unfolds in a world full of options, which invigorate life and history. These very options define the Christian option, the truth of which is shown in Christ, who died and rose again. We can choose between eternal life and death, between God and the idols of power and money, between freedom and oppression, between living and building the community and plunging into individualism; between discovering Christ in the poor, defending them and loving them, and oppressing and plundering them; between building justice and destroying ourselves amid injustice. In a word, we can proclaim and build the Kingdom of the living God or build a Kingdom of death. Each of the options for life, by which we follow Jesus, increase the life within us and clarify our pilgrimage, which is a commitment without return.

7.2 Our Objective

Our objective is that our diocesan Church, in union with the Universal and Latin American Church, will proclaim the life of Jesus and life in a participatory, fraternal community, while committing ourselves to and serving the people, joining like Jesus in the process of liberating the oppressed, who will shape their own history, so that together we can build the new society as a foretaste of the Kingdom.

7.3 Principles Guiding Us

7.3.1 Theological

7.3.1.1 God Our Father

He is the creator of the universe. He has made his creation a gift for all men and women. But in their desire to possess more, human beings kill to become the sole owners of the gifts that God, out of love, gave to us. Thus did social sin develop.

God is a God of life who accompanies his people, who reveals himself in the suffering, resurrected Christ the poor, who opts for the poor, who wants life for all his children, especially for the most deprived and despised in our society, who wants well-being for the people.

God reveals himself to us in history; his salvific action takes place in history through the participation of men.

God makes a Covenant with his people and calls on us to be faithful, to free ourselves from injustice and death, to form a community, and to work together to build the Kingdom.

7.3.1.2 Jesus Christ

The God of life appeared among us as a poor man called Jesus of Nazareth, who was slain by the powerful of this world because he did good. Jesus Christ, God become incarnate in history, took his place among the poor, gave them preference, and made their cause his. This is why Jesus Christ obliges us to seek the fulfillment of the human person and brings us into his project of life and life in abundance (=liberation).

What illuminates our search to build the Kingdom of God is the work of Jesus, his mission, marked by a commitment to the poor. He came to liberate all men from all the servitudes to which sin has subjected them (John 8:32-35):

ignorance, hunger, poverty, oppression, and injustice, the origin of which is selfishness and hatred, and he proclaims the Good News to the poor, liberation to the captive, and freedom to the oppressed.

7.3.1.3 The Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God is present in Jesus and manifests his strength in summoning the people for total liberation.

The Spirit of Jesus, as present in the ecclesiastic community, creates a variety of ministries in it for the fulfillment of its mission, embracing the cultural and socioeconomic conditions of peoples.

7.3.1.4 The Church

It was born among the excluded of the Empire; among them it proclaimed and announced Jesus and the Kingdom.

The Church, the community of those who believe in Jesus, proclaims and promotes liberation from among the poor.

The Church, as a visible reality, is made up of the Hierarchy and of all baptized persons, who are the People of God. The movements that emerge from among the people through the power of the Spirit are the ones that have invigorated the Church.

In our diocese today the People of Believers want to bring about the Kingdom of God and are expressing this in different ways.

7.3.1.5 Mary

The maternal face of God's action, in Mexico she manifests herself as a protector, defender, and evangelizer who, despite having many ambassadors, conducted the evangelization through a poor Indian, Juan Diego.

7.3.2 On Individuals

Western thought focuses on possessing, having. In Latin American thought, the individual develops and is perceived on the basis of being. An individual is not something more because he or she owns more.

The task of philosophy is to open up the panorama of human potentialities to the presence of the other. The fulfillment of the human person entails a growth of the people in their decision-making, a respect for them without manipulation.

The value of human beings is pre-eminent. They all possess an inviolable dignity that must be respected in and of itself; others must respect it and see that it is respected without qualifications.

7.3.3 On Society

Human coexistence in society must be based on the common good, which means the fraternal fulfillment of the common dignity; this means that some are not to be used as tools for the benefit of others.

A proper social order requires a just distribution of resources to thus achieve the common good. This is the priority concern of society and the authorities, whose function is to further the good of the majority and guide the humanization and transformation of natural resources.

Society is pluralistic, and therefore ethnic and cultural variations must be taken into account so that peoples, which shape their own history, can fulfill themselves. This cannot be done unless opportunities for participation in the economy, politics, and social relations are created. Peoples shape their own history, and society is the setting in which human existence achieves fullness by giving the community precedence over individualism.

There are disagreements, interests, and confrontations in society, as well as a confusion of ideas owing to the clash of cultures.

There are countries that are exploited by others. Among them are the countries of Latin America, in which large percentages of people are living in poverty, disadvantaged conditions, and misery. The economy, politics, and ideology of a country are determined by its place in the world: center-periphery.

We are a dependent country at the level of states, municipalities, ejidos, and communities. The break with dependence begins from the periphery when the disadvantaged and oppressed become an aware, organized people. The State does not allow this break because it would shatter its agenda of hegemony. This is why it seeks to control the people and keep them unaware and unorganized through political, economic, ideological, and police-military controls.

7.3.4 Ethical Demands

In this sort of world Christians know that their priority is other people, those who are not secure: the weak, on whose behalf we must struggle for justice and become the hands of God in defense of their human rights (sic).

The comprehensive growth of individuals and a community can be achieved only on the basis of their own culture, so that each and every one shapes its own history. Neither they nor we can do this alone; we must do it together, because we both have values to contribute in the pursuit of happiness. We encourage involvement and the sharing of responsibilities.

We promote human beings in their development as complete persons, thus furthering their progress towards independence.

We must not lose our identity as Christians and pastoral agents, since only as such can we be forces for unity.

7.4 Moving Forward on the Path of Faith, Hope, and Charity

The different response that rich and poor give to the proclamation of the Gospel creates divisions and contradictions in mankind's house (Luke 12:51) and prompts serious opposition to those who proclaim love and justice. We can only deplore the fact that the Lord Jesus's reproaches of the Scribes and Pharisees (Luke 11:37, 12:1) are still fully valid in our diocese. The poor who demand their rights through legal channels are repressed; merchants

profiteer with agricultural products; jails are full of innocent people; and hunger and malnutrition are the permanent companions of many Indians.

In the face of this situation, which is very common in Latin America, our diocese is compelled to intensify its prophetic mission by interpreting the "signs of the times" in light of the Spirit and by calling for the sort of conversion that will lead all to build a just society. This interpretation of history is part of the service that the Church performs in the world and falls within its prophetic ministry, which proclaims God's justice.

Moving forward today on the path of faith, hope, and charity in the Universal and Latin American Church means continuing to preach the Word of God amid conditions in which poverty has spread and grown worse, in which tensions have sharpened, and in which men and women have become aware of their actual situation. Their actual situation is more troubled because the powerful have strengthened their hand through the use of force and have turned a deaf ear to the Gospel, while materialism has taken hold of the modern, industrialized, secularized ruling classes. But on a continent on which the Catholic Church consists largely of the poor, oppressed masses that have been deprived of power, these masses are full of faith, solidarity, and hope for a better future that will enable them to march towards a new world, a forerunner of the Kingdom of Life that will be achieved with Christ in final salvation.

"The resurrection of Christ, which reaffirms his entire mission, reaffirms the hope of man's resurrection in history, a Resurrection that predates and leads to the final resurrection. Mankind throughout the ages is invited as part of this resurrection to reconcile social groups and classes and to restore the order of nature that has been violated, subjugated, and distorted. From Christ's resurrection stems the effective, persevering effort to begin and consolidate processes that are designed to build the sort of life that is not limited to an adequate daily diet but instead entails a recognition of so-called human rights and the reestablishment of a human community whose institutions function for man, not for accumulation" (Easter 1993 Message).

8. An Appeal for Understanding, Dialogue, and Conversion

At a time when contradictions are sharpening in our country and troubled waters are developing in which many are fishing for and finding juicy profits, the responsibility of Christians in the quest for truth must emerge more clearly. By striving to internalize in our own hearts the suffering or anguish of others, we will be better prepared to understand ourselves, to listen, and to change our hearts. Selfishness and one's own advantage are not an appropriate groundwork for dialogue at a time when we need each other. The Lord would have us realize that this approach dehumanizes and destroys. Creation itself protests the plunder and concentration of wealth that our social system brings about, warning mankind that it must change its course urgently lest our survival as a planet be short-lived.

Why not begin a new path without waiting for social institutions to change in response to the despair of those who have been subjugated for ages? Instead of forming production organizations that bring a further concentration of land, what is stopping us, for example, from beginning a dialogue with the Ejido Unions to take a fresh step forward?

Dialogue, a condition for fraternal relations, requires a willingness to listen. A willingness to listen, in turn, is based on an acceptance of others, without assuming that they are acting in bad faith. Representatives who are kind of word, good of heart, and have moral influence will largely assure a successful dialogue.

Individuals, groups, or communities that have clashed must seek to build bridges of communication so that they can be transformed through Christian forgiveness.

The poor, the downtrodden in society should bear witness to the love that Jesus made the sign of his Church. They should know that if the Lord favors them with his love (which no one deserves), if he calls on them to contribute their values to transform society, then this is a society in which the struggle is for all. This is not a transformation from which I exclude my enemy. Rather, I include him, because his enmity is based on the fratricidal society that we wish to change so that the Kingdom of God can be established.

9. Farewell

The Holy Trinity is the reason for our existence. Conceived from eternity as images of the Word, we became part of history as followers of Jesus Christ to be faithful images of him. Our vocation is to build in this world a model of society that is a reflection of the Trinity's Life.

Helping the Church of Jesus Christ to become a sacrament of this New Creation will bespeak our hope.

Unjust inequality runs counter to the plan of God, who makes us his tools so that we can live the "year of grace of the Lord," the permanent Christian jubilee in which wrongs are forgiven and equality established; the hills laid low and the valleys filled in to prepare a way for the Lord (Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:4-6).

No person of the Trinity is inferior to another, nor are there any rivalries; no divine person possesses something that another lacks. To strive for a social system whose workings and institutions abolish plunder and have the sharing of goods as an end, so that there are no longer any have-nots, will lead to irreversible accomplishments in history.

We entrust our path to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who chose to embrace our mestizo identity in her cape and, through the message that she bequeathed to us through Blessed Juan Diego, to give us the assurance that our sufferings would be allayed. May she guide us with her benevolent hand.

San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas 6 August 1993 Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

Msgr. Samuel Ruiz Garcia Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas

Ruiz Interview

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[Article on interview with Bishop Samuel Ruiz by Cesar Romero; place and date not given]

[Text] He is the sort of man who seems more like a whirlwind than a hierarch of the Catholic Church. The strength of his convictions makes him something of a rock. While not overpowering, the pace of his conversation astounds the listener. Questionnaires or attempts to reply are of little use with him. He speaks on behalf of the people, as do those who know that they are enlightened. Samuel Ruiz, the bishop of the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, is a Christian who has been strong enough for decades to take the side of the poor, the exploited, and the suffering. From this perspective he explains what he vigorously calls "conclusive facts, not mere opinions."

"The current government is illegitimate; it does not have a justification from the people. Mistrust is widespread. Everyone is convinced: the system is bad, and the problem is not one individual. The problem is not the driver; it is the car, which by now is a wreck. PRI [Intitutional Revolutionary Party] is not the party of the masses; it is the party of imposition. Until the control that the State and its party have over electoral processes and mechanisms is ended, there will be no democracy in Mexico. If this barrier remains, there could be confrontations and tensions between political players outside institutional rules and accords during the 1994 political transition.

"Our way of life and system of production are oppressing us. The privatizations and the Free Trade Agreement are tools that capitalism needs to continue benefiting the strong, the powerful, both here and overseas. In response to the lack of land and unemployment, the government develops political controls because the poverty that the plundering of this social system produces is a threat to its policies. Thus, laws have to be amended and new crimes invented. This approach violates human rights. So we can see that the system under which we live intrinsically violates human rights.

"People are increasingly feeling the weight of high prices, unemployment, injustice, and growing poverty. The people are dissatisfied. There is malnutrition and disease caused by poverty. Wages are very low and are not enough for families to live on."

In the interview and the pastoral letter that he submitted to John Paul II, the 68-year old bishop elaborated on his previous interpretation of current conditions. As he stressed, "these are not opinions; they are facts, and the only ones who do not see them are those who refuse to." The forcefulness of his words notwithstanding, Ruiz Garcia is even more passionate about another issue.

[Romero] Don Samuel, what has become of the Church of the Poor? It seems that it has been unable to recover since the pope reprimanded your group in Puebla in 1979 with the remark that "you are priests, not political leaders."

[Ruiz] The day that the Church of the Poor is buried, the entire Church is buried. John XXIII said that the Church is a light, a light for all, and it will not be a Church for all unless it is for the poor. If it forgets them, it will be a foreign, dominating Church. [end of answer]

Hyperactive and unusually energetic, this husky gentleman of harsh gestures, little hair, and a kindly look (from behind his thick glasses) traveled from Chiapas to Yucatan to see the pope and, in passing, meet with the "many bishop brothers" who he says also have a strong commitment to the country's disadvantaged. At the end of a busy day he answered and criticized my questions.

[Romero] When the pope visited the last time, there were no diplomatic relations with the Holy See and legislation kept Churches in a sort of juridical state of sin. This time John Paul II will find an amended constitution and will be received as a head of state. How major are all these changes?

[Ruiz] Not that major. Deep down, little has changed. The State does not really recognize the Church. What there is is a mold that all must adapt to if they wish to earn the State's favor and recognition. What there is is a law designed mainly for tariff oversight, tax payments. Moreover, all of these changes are keyed to the FTA.

[Romero] Excuse me?

[Ruiz] Yes, the Free Trade Agreement. The Mexican Government's refusal to maintain relations with the Vatican, which has relations with the overwhelming majority of countries, put Mexico in an archaic position that was incompatible with the so-called modernization that the FTA represented. All of these measures are not a recognition of the Church (which is not to say that there have not been certain changes), because the Church does not need recognition to exist. We cannot deny, though, that there have been some significant accomplishments, such as acknowledgment of our right to run schools, which used to be clandestine. Before, they forced you to run a crooked operation. Perhaps, though, there are more advantages than under nonrecognition, perhaps....

[Romero] Well then, have the changes been useful or not?

[Ruiz] I think so. They are not a bad thing. They are helping to cure the people's schizophrenia about the Church's real and official existence.

[Romero] It would seem that the world is caught between two opposing trends. On the one hand, fundamentalism is resurgent (in Jamaica the pope has already denounced "sectarian fundamentalism"); on the other, there is a trend toward globalization. What should the Church's role in this context be?

[Ruiz] There are really more trends than you are talking about, but you have to remember that the Church is not the parish priest, the bishop, or the pontiff. The Church is you; we are all part of it. The Church's function is to be the leaven of unity. It is a sort of watershed. The Church defines your stance towards life. And it is not just a present or a gift; it is also an effort...The Church seeks a new

society, one of unity even with non-Christians. It calls for a life of charity, not selfishness as in today's society. The answer that it proposes is: no fulfillment is possible without the good of all. I am happy only if I make everyone happy. The only question that we will ask ourselves at the final judgment will be: If he was hungry, did I feed him?

Reliance on the poor represents the only potential for change. They are the ones who will have to transform the Church, the State, and all of society. Look, I see this all as if it were a soccer game. In the first half we are losing, but in the second half we are going to win. We have to win!

[Romero] Yours is a beautiful dream. How wonderful.

[Ruiz] No, we are living it. Such major changes are happening that at times they are hard to see. Just a while ago we were saying Mass in Latin with our backs to the people. Things change. For example, although we are seeing human rights being trampled terribly today, there is also a widespread awareness that this should not be happening. There is a widespread politicization in society today. There is repression, but there is also protest. People, the people have woken up. And changes will not take place in the world except as the result of pressure from those down below. [end of answer]

A small amber cross shines on the chest of the bishop of San Cristobal. A lifetime of work alongside the problems of Chiapas's poor has produced a powerful optimism ("Of course, because I am a Christian"). He says that ecumenism in Latin America will come not from theological confrontation but from a commitment to the continent's poor. "The religion is not that important (without lapsing into relativism), because suffering has no color, religion, or ideology."

According to Samuel Ruiz, the suggestion that he seemingly does not fit in with the Catholic Church that some of us know (high clergy who serve the powerful; charity as an excuse to sidestep the issue of justice; bishops and archbishops as a sort of decadent aristocracy) is "a tall tale by the press." "No, that is not the case. Each person reacts to the world in which he lives. My diocese, like others, is made up of poor, suffering people. This is why I and other bishops are with them."

He also rejects the adjective "progressive." "My Church is traditionalist-progressive." He explains: "A boy who was completely deaf taught me how to drive and used to say to me: 'Look around you first; otherwise, don't drive off.' And that is the way it is: When I look around myself at realities in Latin America, I see poor people. That is why I am with them."

What Samuel Ruiz sees around him in Mexico is injustice, abuse, and suffering: "This State does not have a justification in the people."

[Romero] Does that mean that it is illegitimate?

[Ruiz] Yes. It does not have credibility.

[Romero] And what can you say about PRI?

[Ruiz] I do not say it; I see it. It is dependent on the government. As I say in the pastoral letter, in which I join my voice to that of the people: people are forced to vote for PRI. The electoral system is tainted at its source, because the State controls the processes to benefit its party. Until these practices change, there will be no democracy in Mexico.

[Romero] Don Samuel, I see that some of your arguments coincide with the basic arguments of the left (such as the regime's lack of credibility, the lack of democracy), especially with those of the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution]....

[Ruiz] I am with the people who are on foot; I am with the Gospel. Besides, I do not care what side I am on. I do not accept caricatures as a rightist or leftist; that is not for us Christians. But if you choose to see radicalism in what I am saying, then it is the radicalism of the poor. I feel that power must serve; otherwise, it dominates...Like Jesus, I am for the poor, even if it means throwing myself into an abyss. [end of answer]

By now it is close to midnight in a city that is making the final preparations for welcoming the pope. Only Samuel Ruiz seems not to be tired. He speaks of the letter that he hopes to hand personally to "Peter's heir." The burning word of the poor in his diocese, the same word of the poor all over Mexico. He is categorical in his views of Mexican politics, "which are the people's views, not mine."

[Romero] Aren't your criticisms unusual, especially now when there is so much support for the government?

[Ruiz] The problem is not one person. The problem is not the driver; it is the car, which by now is a wreck.

[Romero] Isn't there room for optimism here?

[Ruiz] Both things exist, more repression, exploitation, and killing, but also more awareness. That is always the case. Good and evil coexist. At times it seems that evil triumphs, that it is stronger than good, but God's heart is always inside just men. This is why there are irreversible gains in the world as well. There is already a very great awareness of the gradual process that is under way towards this fundamental conviction: either we change or all mankind rages.

Views of El Bosque Priest

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[Article by correspondent Oscar Camacho Guzman]

[Text] El Bosque, Chiapas, 11 January—Sitting by the door of the parish church on a pine bench that was once painted brown, Herve Camier Duplouy, the priest in this town nestled in the Chiapas highlands, looks with contained rage at the soldiers filing into the house of God, bearing weapons and precise instructions.

"These are times of persecution and harassment for the Church of the poor in these parts," he says tersely, powerless to do anything about the soldiers who are poking around in every corner, overturning piled up planks, and peering everywhere some "lawbreaker" might be hiding.

"They are profaning the church, searching, harassing...," murmurs this French-born priest, who at age 56 "embraced the option for the poor" in his pastoral work, an option that he has been preaching for seven years in this region of northern Chiapas.

"I think it would be best if you did not bring weapons into the church," cried Father Herve Camier Duplouy, but his pleas were not heeded this time.

The soldiers have taken action. They are part of the military operation that the Mexican Army has conducted here for the second straight day under the assumption that members of the Zapatist National Liberation Army (EZLN) are lying in ambush somewhere near. A convoy of 1,500 soldiers has arrived in this region, backed by three guns and a light tank, to deal with the possible presence of "some 100 Zapatists" in the surrounding area, as the locals tell it.

"Is it legal for them to enter with weapons and search the church?" this reporter asked one of the officers who was watching the scene from a street corner.

"Legal?" he stammered.

"Yes, is it legal?" I asked again. The reply was total silence.

Meanwhile, the French priest, sitting on his old pine bench by the door to the church, reflected on this "dirty war," spoke of the Church, and quoted Saint Luke and Sacred Scripture.

"Do I think that the Church bears some responsibility for the situation in the state? I do not know. The only thing that I can say is that it never has and never will give anybody a single weapon.

"The Church is not responsible for their taking up arms. No, not that. Absolutely not. We are responsible for them, the Indians, no longer accepting idols and recognizing themselves as equal to others, as children of a single father and mother of God. But that is a very honorable responsibility."

He repeats: "Yes, we raised people's awareness, but we have never given arms."

"We have raised people's awareness in spite of their own reluctance to believe that they can be free, that they can have dignity, because they have always been victims of indifference, of scorn...."

"Are you surprised by what is happening?"

"I see it as a sign that people are tired, that is to say, tired of seeing no change in their situation. A situation in which they are unable to choose the authorities they want, because PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] always wins of course. In economic terms, they do not see any improvement in their situation, in the unfair prices for their products. They are tired of all the red tape, all the marches, all the mass actions. I think that it is a sign of tiredness."

"Is it easy for a priest to make the preferential option for the poor in his pastoral work? Has it been easy for you? Have you had problems?"

"Well, this preferential option for the poor comes from Holy Scripture, from Bartolome de las Casas; it is the model of Jesus Christ; Matthew 5:3, and more recently, the Second Vatican Council, where many bishops, especially Latin American bishops, were converted (paradoxically, they were inspired by the bishops from the wealthy countries); and also Samuel Ruiz in his pastoral letter, which was published before John Paul II's visit.

"First we sided with the rich, thinking that this was normal, but later we woke up. After the Council we saw that in our diocese as of 1974, the Lacandon Forest, which is heavily Indian and very poor, woke up, and instead of turning to the rich, the bosses, we went straight to the people.

"This is something that the powerful are never going to forgive Samuel Ruiz for. The diocese then lost its wealthy people."

"Have you had problems in recent days?"

"Yes, but I am not going to allow my heart to be overcome by fear. You can sense the hostility among people here, as they do not know where to go, they do not know which side is going to be stronger. And there are also these people (the soldiers)...It is a big stage...a theater, a circus," says the priest, his eyes almost tearful, his voice breaking.

The priest gazes into the distance towards the lower part of the town, where more than 25 trucks, tanks, and hundreds of soldiers remain stationed. They arrived in El Bosque on Monday after the mayor asked for them because armed rebels were rumored to be prowling the area.

It all started when five catechizers were arrested and thrown into the municipal jail. Around 150 people from neighboring towns then went to "rescue" them. The residents of this municipality say that they were "peasants under arms." But they also say that when "they arrived that time to rescue their companions, none of them were carrying weapons. They only came to get them and took off. But we think that they may return. This is why we asked them (the soldiers) to come," say several locals who have trouble expressing themselves in a foreign language.

Meanwhile, army troops hand out food, reminding people all the time that it is a gift "from the president of the republic."

Sitting on his old wooden bench, the El Bosque parish priest says that it has not been easy for people to accept "the kindness that you want to show them...It is not easy for these people to believe that love can develop so quickly after they have been treated with disdain for so long. These people, who have always been looked down on, are not going to believe this overnight. They are not going to believe so readily. They are still going to lower their heads...."

"And what about those who have already lifted their heads high?"

"Oh, I think that they are the rebels!" he says in conclusion, while alongside him the soldiers listen, watch, and act.